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Recount settles the score

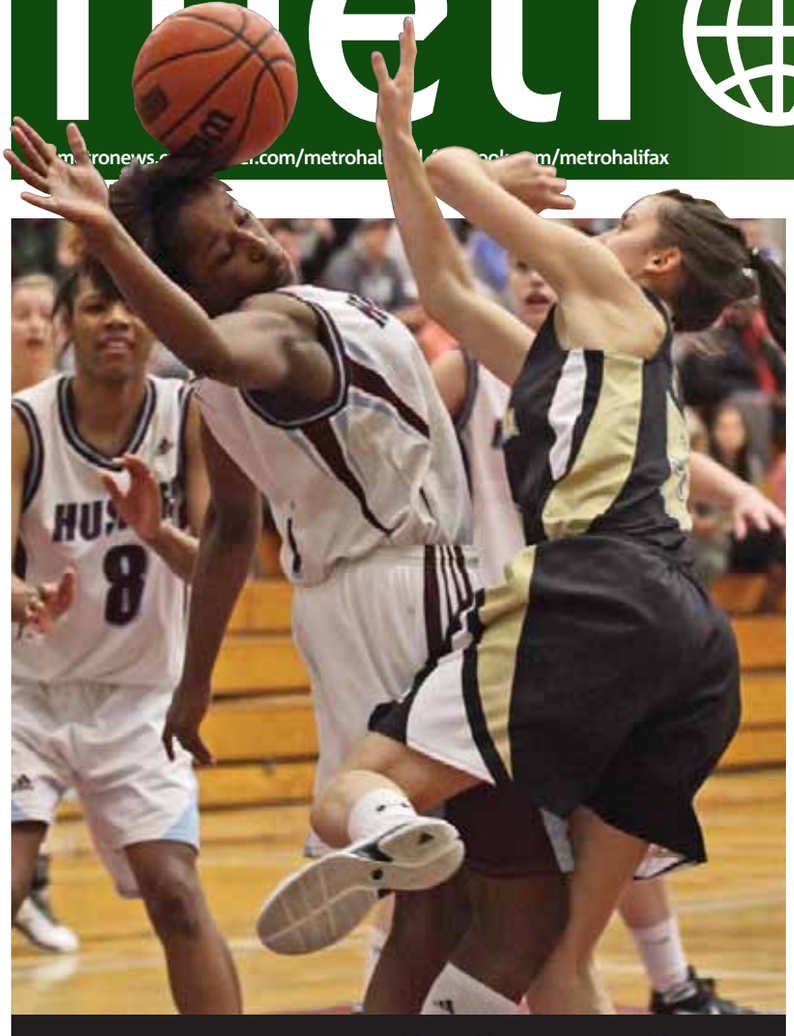
Bill Karsten is confirmed as councillor in District 3 PAGE 3

SANTA'S LITTLE HELPER

ACTOR LEAVES HIS MARK ON NEPTUNE PRODUCTION AS BUDDY THE ELF PAGE 17



HALIFAX metro®
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RIVALS CLASH

Justine Colley of the Saint Mary's Huskies, left, and Courtney Thompson of the Dalhousie Tigers collide during Atlantic University Sport women's basketball action at The Tower on Wednesday night. The Huskies crushed Dalhousie 85-64 to remain perfect on the season. Story, page 40. JEFF HARPER/METRO

Injuries creep up in crosswalks

Sharing the road.
Hundreds of drivers issued tickets for failing to yield to pedestrians



HALEY RYAN
haley.ryan@metronews.ca

Halifax police say they will continue to educate people on crosswalk safety, rather than stepping up enforcement.

New statistics provided by police show 125 tickets have been issued to motorists for failing to yield to pedestrians in a crosswalk so far in 2012, up from 111 last year.

But these numbers have been declining since 2008, when there were 216 tickets issued, followed by 150 in 2009 and 133 in 2010.

Const. Pierre Bourdages of Halifax Regional Police said fewer tickets are being issued partly because both the integrated traffic unit and municipality have emphasized crosswalk safety through educational campaigns.

"It's not only the motorist or the pedestrian, it's a joint effort," Bourdages said.

Although there have been three crosswalk injuries and a fatality within the last week, injury numbers in HRM are well below the 42 recorded in 2008.

In 2009, 29 people were injured by vehicles in crosswalks, followed by 38 in 2010 and 24 last year. As of Sept. 15, there have been 21 injuries this year but several in recent weeks push the total over last year's figure.

"Even if we have one injury, that's worrisome," Bourdages said, adding the four deaths so far this year are "concerning."

"It's constantly being done, through the schools, traffic units," he added about safety education.

"Before you engage yourself in a crosswalk, look both ways and make sure cars will actually stop, that they see you."

Bourdages said pedestrians can be fined $400 if they step into a crosswalk right before a car passes, for failing to activate the flashing amber lights when available or for jaywalking.

And fatalities have doubled from 2011, with four this year and two last year. In 2008 there was only one crosswalk death, and in both 2009 and 2010 there were none.

Injuries adding up

154

People injured in crosswalks between 2008 and Sept. 15 of this year

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Irving. Shipyard workers accept deal

The union representing more than 1,000 workers at the Halifax Shipyard has voted to accept a six-year collective agreement with Irving Wednesday night, after nearly a year of often difficult negotiations.

The workers belong to Local 1 Canadian Auto Workers-Marine Workers Federation.

The deal includes a 24 per cent pay hike over the life of the contract, including an immediate 10 per cent increase, the CBC reports.

Karl Risser, president of the union, stated in a release from Irving that the agreement is a favourable deal for current and future employees who are preparing for the upcoming Irving Shipbuilding contract.

"Our negotiating committee worked very hard to get a good deal for our members, one that increased benefits for workers and improves our ability to attract skilled trades to Halifax Shipyard to build new ships for Canada," he said.

Ross Langley, vice chairman of Irving Shipbuilding, stated he was relieved to have the dispute behind him.

Workers had been without a contract since December 2011 when the union entered into discussions with Irving Shipbuilding Inc. on a three-year collective agreement.

Wednesday's vote comes one day after the president of Irving Shipbuilding left the company for unspecified reasons.

In a brief e-mailed statement, spokeswoman Mary Keith says Steve Durrell is no longer working with the shipbuilder. She writes the company is seeking a replacement and that in the interim Langley will lead the operation.

METRO/THE CANADIAN PRESS



Bill Karsten speaks to reporters at the Halifax Law Courts after learning there would be a judicial recount in his district. Wednesday's recount produced Karsten as the winner after Jackie Barkhouse had been declared winner last month. JEFF HARPER/METRO FILE

Recount hands win to Karsten

District 3. Incumbent to be sworn in on Tuesday after tight race



RUTH DAVENPORT
ruth.davenport@metronews.ca

A Nova Scotia Supreme Court judge has settled the question of who won the council seat in HRM's District 3.

More than a month after the election, Justice Kevin Coady completed a recount of the paper ballots and confirmed Bill Karsten as the successful candidate.

Sportsmanship

"I wasn't sure it was worth it, but to experience it today, I'm really happy we went through the process."

Jackie Barkhouse, original winner of the District 3 council election

"I'm elated," said Karsten after the declaration on Wednesday. "This has been a long process ... and I'm anxious to roll up my sleeves and get to work."

The district was initially awarded to Jackie Barkhouse after the election Oct. 20. A review of the ballots on Oct. 23 reversed the results, giving Karsten the win by 68 votes.

Wednesday's recount made Karsten the winner by 66 votes.

Barkhouse said Wednesday she was pleased the recount had taken place.

Don Chard, one of Barkhouse's former constituents, went to court to get the recount after filing an application a day late.

He said he's pleased with Justice Coady's handling of the case.

"He used common sense throughout and I think that's everything you can ask for," said the former NDP MLA.

However, Chard has concerns about the election results overall, suggesting hundreds of phone ballots may not have been counted.

He said anyone who voted for mayor or councillor and then hung up without waiting to confirm their choice wouldn't have had their vote counted.

"I think there is a need in particular to address this question of how the telephone vote gets done because there should not be that opportunity for confusion," he said.



Recipients had 'extraordinary capacity to give,' Lt.-Gov. says

Order of Nova Scotia. Five people invested during morning ceremony at Government House


HALEY RYAN
haley.ryan@metronews.ca

Under the twinkling chandeliers of Government House, two old friends received the highest honour in the province on Wednesday.

Alexa Ann McDonough and Silver Donald Cameron received the Order of Nova Scotia from Lt.-Gov. John James Grant during the investiture ceremony.

McDonough said she met Cameron when she was a teenager, and their families have been friends for nearly 45 years.

"It was a nice personal touch," McDonough said about having Cameron there.

McDonough, 68, was an advocate for gender equality and social issues during her time in politics.

She was elected in 1980 as the first female leader of the New Democratic Party of Nova Scotia, becoming the first woman to lead a major party in the country.

In 1995, she became the federal leader of the NDP.

At times, she was the only woman in the legislature. But McDonough said while people encouraged her to share stories of sexism or discrimination, she considers herself privileged to have been in office.

"It's the women fighting serious economic inequalities, fighting serious racist treatment, that are the real trailblazers," she said.

Finance Minister Maureen MacDonald congratulated the winners on behalf of Premier Darrell Dexter, who was in Ottawa. MacDonald said McDonough was one of her biggest mentors.

"Others blazed that trail for me and I blazed the trail with her, and that's how people move forward," McDonough said.

"All progress starts with tiny steps."

Cameron, 75, said he thought his type of career wouldn't lead to provincial recognition, but was glad to be wrong about that.

A noted author, educator and environmental advocate, Cameron was the first writer-in-residence at Cape Breton University and the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.

He also hosts The Green Interview, a website showcasing conversations with famous experts like Jane Goodall on environmental issues.

"I have grandchildren, I would like them to inherit a planet that was something like the rich and beautiful and wonderful place that I had," Cameron said.

"I'd like to be the guy who was remembered as having seen the danger and tried to do something about it."

Quoted

"They epitomize the best about our province."

Lt.-Gov John James Grant on the five 2012 Order of Nova Scotia recipients



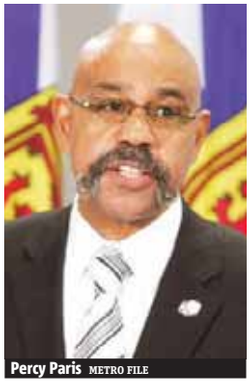
Former NDP leader Alexa McDonough, left, and Silver Donald Cameron smile for official photos after receiving the Order of Nova Scotia at Government House on Wednesday. JEFF HARPER/METRO

The other inductees

- **Graham W. Dennis,** who was honoured posthumously, left a legacy as the country's longest-serving newspaper publisher in his role with the Chronicle-Herald, which remains independently owned.
- **Robert James Morgan,** a professor at Cape Breton University, was honoured posthumously. He preserved and shared the history of Cape Breton island in his books, and helped to develop the Fortress of Louisbourg National History Park.
- **Bridglal Pachai,** seen at right, was born and raised during the apartheid years in South Africa, and became the first black in his country to earn a doctorate of history. He moved to Halifax in 1975 and taught at local universities, becoming an authority on African Nova Scotian history and advocate for social justice.



Panel calls for overhaul of regional development authorities



Percy Paris METRO FILE

An expert panel in Nova Scotia is recommending a new model for regional economic development.

The panel says the province should create six so-called Regional Enterprise Networks that would bring together the government, businesses, municipalities and other groups involved in economic development.

The new networks would replace the province's 12 regional development authorities, which will have their federal funding cut in May 2013.

The federal and provincial governments and municipalities had each provided about $2.1 million to pay for the regional authorities, first introduced in 1993.

Economic Development Minister Percy Paris says the new system is needed because Nova Scotia has recorded the worst economic growth of any province for the past 20 years.

Among other things, the new organizations would develop regional economic plans, introduce a new funding model and improve their performance standards and accountability. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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SIRT. Police launch probe after man breaks leg during chase with cop

The Serious Incident Response Team is investigating after a man was injured while running from a Halifax police officer in Dartmouth on Tuesday.

At about 3:30 p.m., a middle-aged man was arrested for shoplifting at the Wal-Mart in Dartmouth Crossing. He was being escorted by police when he ran away and an officer gave chase. The pair ran through the Wal-Mart parking lot, across a street, through the Golf Town/Staples parking lot, across another street and then down the embankment in front of JYSK.

A release from the province says the man was arrested while lying on the ground in front of JYSK with a broken leg.

"In accordance with the Police Act, the Halifax Regional Police Service referred the incident to the SIRT, which assumed responsibility for the investigation," the release says. METRO

Did you see?

Anyone with information is asked to contact SIRT at 424-2010.

Truro. Halifax man charged with sexual assault against teen

A Halifax man has been arrested on sexual assault charges involving a 15-year-old girl from the Truro area.

Insp. Robert Hearn of the Truro Police Service said an investigation resulted in charges of sexual assault, sexual interference, Internet luring, invitation to sexual touching and an indecent act being laid against a 26-year-old Halifax man whose identity has yet to be revealed.

The man has been released from custody on a promise to appear in provincial court in Truro in January. TRURO DAILY NEWS

Public meeting. Developer to reveal revised plans for Herring Cove Road

Halifax Regional Municipality will host a public-information meeting on Thursday night regarding a proposed development on Herring Cove Road.

Developer W.M. Fares is planning a mixed-use building at 286/290/292 Herring Cove Rd. It will include a daycare and residential units. The planning regulations don't permit a commercial or multi-unit residential building on the property, so the developer has asked for amendments to the Municipal Planning Strategy and Mainland Land Use Bylaw.

The developer had initially proposed a four-storey residential building for 286/290 Herring Cove Rd., and a public-information meeting was held last February. METRO

Where and when

The meeting starts at 7 p.m. at the Captain William Spry Community Centre on Kidston Road.

Report

Riding boundaries under review

The Federal Electoral Boundaries Commission is proposing revisions to eight of Nova Scotia's 11 ridings. The commission says the ridings of West Nova, Kings-Hants and Sydney-Victoria should keep their present boundaries, but the remaining ridings should have their lines redrawn. The report comes after public consultations on the issue this year.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Free to go

Crown withdraws charges in home-invasion case

A 20-year-old man was hospitalized with facial injuries after four people broke into a Port Hawkesbury home in June. But on Tuesday, charges were dropped against Mitchell O'Toole, 19, Ashley Victoria Hunter, 19, Matthew Keizer, 23, and James O'Toole, 29. They had been charged with assault causing bodily harm and assault with a weapon.

THE CANADIAN PRESS



The commercial appeals of property assessments are coming from areas such as downtown Halifax. METRO FILE

Commercial appeals siphoning tax revenues

Money matters.
Financial update sets stage for tax reform



RUTH DAVENPORT
ruth.davenport@metronews.ca

Halifax Regional Municipality is taking a financial hit because of commercial property owners who are appealing their assessments — and winning.

The municipality's audit and finance committee on Wednesday received the second-quarter financial update, which projects a net operating surplus of $9.1 million.

On the upside, acting chief financial officer Greg Keefe pointed out that revenues from the Deed Transfer Tax have risen by $3 million.

"That's good news. It shows a lot of economic activity," he told the committee.

But property-tax revenues will be lower than expected because of the "trend on tax appeals for commercial properties being higher than anticipated."

"That's an interesting comment on the shortcomings of our assessment system, that there's so many appeals and so many are successful," Coun. Tim Outhit said.

Jerry Blackwood, HRM manager of revenue, said projections show a deficit of $450,000 in commercial tax revenues for 2012, and another $2.2 million will be lost to appeals.

Blackwood said 872 commercial appeals are underway, with a total value of more than $2 billion.

There were 940 appeals in 2011, worth a little more than $2.2 billion.

Blackwood said the numbers are comparable, but the projected appeal-loss ratio is higher this year.

"It's just that budgets are based on past trending and past losses … and sometimes you can be under budget and sometimes you can be over budget," he said.

Keefe told the committee the first step toward tax reform could be taken at the next meeting, on Dec. 19. He cautioned the tax system is too complex to change all at once.

"What's the bite-size chunk we can take to work with this year, and what can we look at next year?" he said. "We'll go away and come back with some options on that."

Quoted

"For every action, there's a reaction. We need to look at equity and fairness and understand that a reduction in one (tax rate) means an increase in the other."

Coun. Linda Mosher



The financial update says Metro Transit's projected deficit is $851,000, but HRM's acting CFO says it will be lower. METRO FILE

Transit, regional police facing projected deficits: Report

The state of Metro Transit's finances, revealed in the second-quarter financial update, raised some eyebrows among members of Halifax Regional Municipality's audit and finance committee on Wednesday.

The update says the projected deficit for the transit agency is $851,000, due to a "significant fare decrease" of $1.9 million in the wake of last February's strike.

But HRM's acting CFO, Greg Keefe, told the committee the deficit will likely be significantly lower.

"We just got the draft of October year-end projections, and the deficit has dropped to $350,000," he said. "So Metro Transit is dealing with it internally through savings."

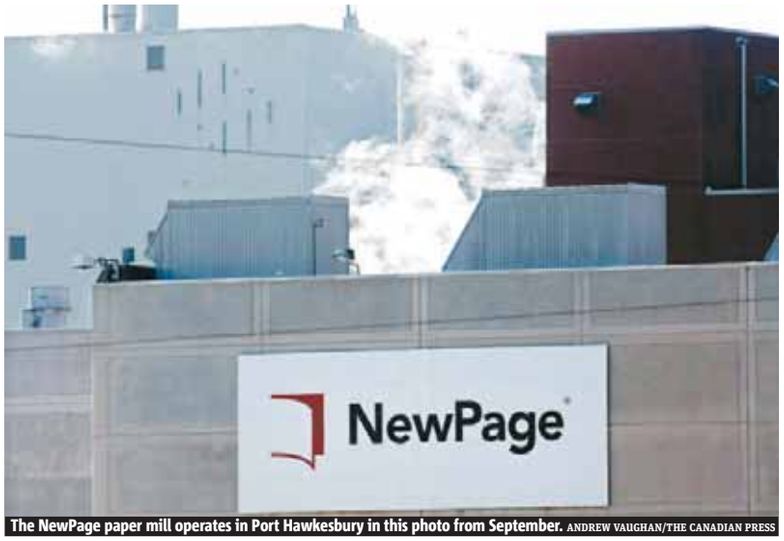
The report suggests the deficit will be offset by savings on fuel costs, which are well below the budget of $562,000.

Halifax Regional Police are also projecting a deficit: $701,000. The report blames an increase in overtime spending "due to higher-than-expected rates of major crime."

The extra costs will be offset by salary savings and revenue from record checks.

A hike in revenue from parking tickets, summary offence tickets, development permits and animal licences adds up to a projected surplus of $1.5 million for Community and Recreation Services, the largest surplus of the municipal business units.

RUTH DAVENPORT/METRO



The NewPage paper mill operates in Port Hawkesbury in this photo from September. ANDREW VAUGHAN/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Former mill workers may be hit with $5M bill

Mistake. 250 retirees possibly on hook for pension miscalculation

A mistake in pension calculations could see about 250 retirees from the former NewPage Port Hawkesbury mill hit with a $5-million bill.

Harvey Warner, who retired in 2006 and serves on a committee for the mill's pensioners, says he's on the hook to pay back $32,843 to the current administrator of the pension plan, Morneau Chapelle Ltd.

He said he and other pensioners were recently notified that the plan's previous administrator, Aon PLC, had made a mistake in calculating early-retirement provisions years prior to the bankruptcy of the mill in 2011. A call seeking comment from Aon was not returned.

Warner told reporters at the legislature Wednesday the pension administrator has indicated mistakes were made because the Canada Revenue Act and the Income Tax Act weren't followed by the former actuaries and administrators."We're very vulnerable," he said.

However, Paul Chang of Morneau Chapelle, said the letter that went out to pensioners wasn't a bill. He said it simply informed them what they would owe.

He said his company's first choice is to recover the money from the previous administrator Aon and negotiations are ongoing.

"The issue is with our legal counsel who are talking to the other administrator's legal counsel and the need for any recovery from members directly will depend on the outcome of those discussions," said Chang.

Chang said because some pension-plan members were overpaid to the detriment of other plan members, his company would consider asking those who were overpaid to pay back what is owed in the event Aon doesn't foot the bill. Chang said that would strictly be an option of "last resort."

Nancy MacNeill Smith, the province's superintendent of pensions, said it was up to the pension plan's current administrator to go after the previous administrator to recover the money.

MacNeill Smith said her office doesn't have oversight of individual benefits and only ensures the structure of pension plans follows provincial regulations. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Cape Breton. Inquiry into complaints about mandatory-retirement policy to proceed

The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission says the Cape Breton Regional Municipality is jumping the gun by trying to quash a board of inquiry into complaints about its mandatory retirement policy.

Director David Shannon says the municipality should wait for a ruling by the board of inquiry.

"If the CBRM found either an error of fact or an error of law. In other words if they did not like the decision of the board of inquiry, then they appeal that," said Shannon, who is also the CEO of the human-rights commission. "These guys are putting the cart before the horse. That's the problem."

2009

Lawyers for the municipality have argued the human rights commission is trying to retry an issue that has been determined by a previous board of inquiry in a complaint made by a former employee in 2009.

Shannon said the commission plans to go ahead with the inquiry, which will be conducted by Truro lawyer Dennis James, and which could be underway dealing with preliminary issues by early next month.

The municipality is seeking a court order in Nova Scotia Supreme Court that would put down the board of inquiry into the complaints of a number of former employees who were forced to retire at age 65.

Supreme Court Justice Patrick Murray has set dates of Feb. 26-27 for a judicial review into the decision to hold the inquiry. CAPE BRETON POST



Pimping charges

Court delays ruling on Strauss-Kahn

A French court on Wednesday pushed back a ruling on whether to drop aggravated pimping charges against Dominique Strauss-Kahn.

Three Appeals Court judges in the northern city of Douai set a new date of Dec. 19 to decide the demand by the former IMF chief to annul the charges linking him to a suspected prostitution ring run out of a luxury hotel in Lille.

The economist admits attending "libertine" gatherings but denies knowing that some women present were paid.

If the judges decide to dismiss the aggravated pimping charges, Strauss-Kahn would become an "assisting witness" in the case, meaning that if investigators discovered new elements implicating him he could face preliminary charges once again.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Polygamist property

Texas trying to seize Jeffs' ranch

Texas wants to take ownership of Warren Jeffs' polygamist ranch where the convicted sect leader and his followers sexually assaulted children, state prosecutors said Wednesday.

The Texas attorney general's office filed a seizure warrant on Wednesday. A judge will determine whether the state can take control of the 1,600-acre property owned by the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Jeffs was convicted last year of sexually assaulting two of his underage brides. Prosecutors used DNA evidence to show he fathered a child with a 15-year-old girl prosecutors say he took as one of his spiritual wives.

Jeffs is serving life in prison in Texas but has continued to try and continue to lead his church while serving his sentence.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



South Korea moves to stem digital addiction

Kindergarten. Kids from age 3 to 5 will be taught to protect themselves from overusing digital gadgets and Internet

In South Korea, where the government provides counselling programs and psychological treatment for about two million people who cannot wean themselves from playing online computer games, youngsters have previously not been considered as potential addicts.

But now the government is concerned enough to make it mandatory for children as young as three to be schooled in controlling their device and Internet use.

Starting next year, South Korean children from age three to five will learn at kindergartens how to control their exposure to digital devices and the danger of staying online for long hours. The Ministry of Public Administration and Security is revising laws so that teaching the danger of Internet addiction becomes mandatory from pre-school institutions to high schools.

Child addicts

- The National Information Society Agency estimates 160,000 South Korean children between age five and nine are addicted to the Internet either through smartphones, tablet computers or personal computers.
- Such children appear animated when using gadgets but distracted and nervous when they are cut off from the devices and will forgo eating or going to the toilet so they can continue playing online, according to the agency.

New mobile devices that instantly respond to a touch of a finger seem to make children more restless than before and lack empathy, said Kim Jun-hee, a kindergarten teacher who conducted an eight-month study on Internet safety and addiction education for pre-school children. She said educating children against digital and web addiction should start early because smartphones are their new toys.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



A subway rider plays a game on a smartphone in Seoul, South Korea. The government estimated 2.55 million people across South Korea are addicted to smartphones, using the devices for eight hours a day or more.

AHN YOUNG-JOON/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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[1]Subject to change. Flights are based on the AIR MILES Reward Program Low and High Season schedule. For example, Low Season = Jan. 8-Feb.28, April 1-May 31, and Sept. 16-Dec. 15. High Season = Mar.1-Mar.31, June 1-Sept.15, and Dec.16-Jan.7. Required number of reward miles is determined by the departure date. All reward miles quoted shown are for round-trip flights. All rewards are subject to the Terms and Conditions of the AIR MILES Reward Program, and are subject to change and may be withdrawn without notice. Some restrictions apply. Quantities may be limited. To redeem for Travel Rewards, you must have accumulated sufficient AIR MILES reward miles in your Dream Balance. Collectors must pay taxes, fuel surcharges and other applicable charges and fees on air travel Rewards. Travel Rewards may be subject to a minimum 2-day advance booking and availability from participating suppliers. Additional flight options may be offered requiring additional reward miles. For complete details, see current AIR MILES Program Terms and Conditions available at airmiles.ca or the AIR MILES Customer Care Centre at 1-888-AIR MILES (in Toronto (416) 226-5171). [2]Bonus offer of 1,500 AIR MILES reward miles is available from October 24, 2012 to November 30, 2012 and is limited to new accounts. New accounts and Plans are defined as BMO bank accounts and Plans opened and registered in the name of a customer who has not had another account or Plan with BMO since August 1, 2012. The Bonus offer will be awarded, after: (1) a Pre-Authorized Credit (Direct Deposit) is set up on a new Qualifying Account, or (2) a Pre-Authorized Debit (Bill Payment) is set up on a new Qualifying Account along with a minimum deposit of $1,500 CDN into the new Qualifying Account. "Qualifying Account" includes Primary Chequing and Premium Rate Savings set up as a lead account. The lead account is the one you designate to pay any fees required by your banking (i.e. monthly Plan fees, transaction fees). The funds from the Pre-Authorized Credit or the $1,500 deposit along with the Pre-Authorized Debit must appear in your account by December 31, 2012. Limit of one Bonus offer per Account. The Bonus reward miles will be applied to your Collector account by February 15, 2013. [3]Additional AIR MILES reward miles can be earned through the BMO AIR MILES bank plan in the following manner: Award of AIR MILES reward miles is made for Debit Card purchases minus refunds from your Primary Chequing Account with the following Everyday Bank Plan: The BMO AIR MILES bank plan. The number of reward miles will be rounded down to the nearest whole number. Fractions of reward miles will not be awarded. One AIR MILES reward mile is earned for every $30 spent on your debit card to a maximum of 50 AIR MILES reward miles per month or 600 Bonus AIR MILES reward miles each year. AIR MILES reward miles can be earned by maintaining a $3,000 minimum monthly balance at all times in a Primary Chequing account that has been designated as the lead account for the BMO AIR MILES bank plan. The lead account is the one you designate to pay any fees required by your banking (i.e. monthly Plan fees, transaction fees). A maximum of 50 reward miles per month or 600 Bonus AIR MILES reward miles each year can be earned on the BMO AIR MILES bank plan by maintaining a minimum monthly balance of $3,000. A maximum of 25 AIR MILES reward miles per month or 300 Bonus AIR MILES reward miles per year can be earned if you have a BMO AIR MILES World MasterCard. ®†Registered trade-marks of Bank of Montreal. ®†Trademarks of AIR MILES International Trading B.V. Used under license by LoyaltyOne, Inc. and Bank of Montreal.



Swedish company TOP-TOY's newly released gender-neutral catalogue. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Toy maker goes gender-neutral

Guns and dolls. Swedish company retools after drawing criticism for gender roles in its catalogue

Dolls for Billy, toy guns for Sally? One of Sweden's largest toy chains has caused a stir by publishing a gender-neutral catalogue showing girls playing with toys typically perceived as those for boys and vice versa.

TOP-TOY released their gender-neutral Christmas catalogue this week showing a girl brandishing a toy gun and a boy playing with a doll, after the company was previously chastised for being too conservative in encouraging outdated gender roles in their marketing material.

"We want our catalogues to reflect the way boys and girls play in real life, and not present a stereotype image of them. If both girls and boys in Sweden like to play with a toy kitchen, then we want to mirror this pattern," said Thomas Meng, Retail Marketing Director for BR Toys and TOYS "R" U.S. in the Nordic countries, in a statement online.

In 2008, the retailer was reprimanded by Swedish Advertising Ombudsman after customers complained about catalogues that featured girls dressed as princesses and boys dressed as superheroes.

The company decided to try a more gender-neutral approach to the catalogues and receive training from the Ombudsman's office.

TOP-TOY produced identical holiday catalogues in Denmark and Sweden, but the gender of the kids is reversed in the Swedish edition. The Danish catalogue shows a boy holding a gun, while in the Swedish version, a girl holds a gun. The Hello Kitty page in the Swedish catalogue also replaces a girl with a boy and one girl.

Shamie Ramgoolam, co-owner of the toy store Silly Goose Kids in Toronto, says she tries to run her store with the same gender-neutral philosophy.

"It's the way it should be," said Ramgoolam. "Kids have certain things they like and they will play with what they like," she said.

"But the marketing is not aimed at the children, they are marketing to the people, the parents and grandparents, who will buy those toys," she said.

Meng says similar changes will be made in other Nordic markets as well, but the Swedish catalogue was changed first because the "gender debate in Sweden is further ahead," he said.

Earlier this year, Sweden introduced a new gender-neutral pronoun — 'hen' — to replace he and she in its National Encyclopedia.

The move took place following national debate sparked by the publication of the country's first gender-neutral book Kivi and Monster Dog, in which Kivi wants a dog for "hen" birthday.

And since 2008, the government has spent millions on promoting gender equality in school, including introduction of laws and regulations that ensure that teachers are actively working to reverse gender stereotypes. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Quoted

"To me, why not bring out the nurturing side of a boy? Who says, you can't bring out the masculine side of a girl too."

Shamie Ramgoolam, co-owner of Silly Goose Kids in Toronto responding to TOP-TOY's new marketing strategy

Vietnam

U.S. Embassy suspends account with website

The U.S. Embassy in Hanoi has deactivated its account on a popular Vietnamese website that's full of suspected pirated music and Hollywood movies. The U.S. had used the site to promote American values, including respect for intellectual-property rights.

The State Department on Wednesday said the social media account with ZingMe was suspended after a review prompted by concerns about digital piracy on the site.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Poland

Same-sex couples win the battle for inheritance rights

Poland's Supreme Court said Wednesday that a same-sex partner can inherit the right to a deceased's rented apartment.

The decision extends a right that so far was granted only to spouses, children, grandchildren or unmarried heterosexual partners.

The ruling was a response to the case of a gay man, identified only as Adam K., who sued Warsaw city authorities for denying him the right to stay in the city-owned apartment his partner had rented. The suit was rejected by a lower court that eventually sought the interpretation from the Supreme Court.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Britain

Church of England to vote again on female bishops

The Church of England has taken a tentative step toward trying again to get its governing General Synod to approve female bishops.

The church said Wednesday the Archbishops' Council agreed this week that the issue needed to be resolved "as a matter of urgency" and should be restarted when the General Synod next meets in July.

Church legislation authorizing female bishops failed last week when laity in the General Synod failed to muster the necessary two-thirds majority, falling just six votes short. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Tory pollster puts Harper on the spot

Liberals want PM to apologize.
Firm censured for conducting a misinformation campaign against MP

Liberals are demanding an apology from Prime Minister Stephen Harper over the conduct of a Tory pollster.

Campaign Research was censured for conducting a misinformation campaign against MP Irwin Cotler.

An investigation by the market research industry's watchdog, the Market Research and Intelligence Association, concluded Wednesday that the actions of Campaign Research Inc. brought the industry into disrepute.

The association received seven complaints of professional misconduct against Campaign Research.

The complaints related to a voter identification poll the company conducted last autumn on behalf of the federal Conservative party in Cotler's Montreal riding.

The company's callers suggested to constituents — falsely — that Cotler either had or was about to quit as Liberal MP.

Cotler said the Conservatives must now take responsibility for the conduct of their pollster.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Quoted

"The effort to dislodge Mr. Cotler was, to use a technical term, disgusting. It was beyond any standard we've ever known."

Bob Rae,
interim Liberal leader



Shake on it, partner!

Two partners in trade meet in Ottawa to cement ties and talk economics. Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Mexico's president-elect Enrique Pena Nieto hold a news conference on Parliament Hill on Wednesday. Pena Nieto was making a whirlwind visit just three days before being sworn in — and after meeting U.S. President Barack Obama in Washington. Pena Nieto wants to encourage Canadian investment in his country's state-run oil company.

SEAN KILPATRICK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Garneau. Spaceman aims to send the PM into orbit

Former astronaut Marc Garneau joined the federal Liberal leadership race Wednesday, touting himself as the party's best chance to defeat Stephen Harper.

Garneau cast himself as the candidate with the most leadership experience and as someone who would make diversifying the Canadian economy a top priority.

The former president of the Canadian Space Agency joins a crowded field that includes fellow Montreal MP Justin Trudeau, the eldest son of former prime minister Pierre Trudeau.

Garneau is expected to give Trudeau, the presumptive front-runner, one of his biggest tests in the race for the top Liberal job.

Trudeau welcomed Garneau's entry into the race. "He's a man of ideas and strength and he is going to be an important player … in the rebuilding of the Liberal party," he said.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Surgical mesh. Women in agony ask Sask. to pay

One woman has not been able to sit down for seven months.

Another says she feels like she has steel wool inside her.

A third fears she might not have more children.

Ruth Olson, Marika English and Stephanie Brad all say they're in severe agony because of complications from surgical mesh and they're begging the province of Saskatchewan to pay for its complete removal.

"We are angry, we are sick and we are in pain," English said Wednesday at the Saskatchewan legislature.

The women had surgical mesh inserted to help with pelvic organ prolapse. But they say the mesh has failed.

They say the Saskatchewan health ministry has turned down their requests for funding out-of-country medical coverage.

THE CANADIAN PRESS



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This promotional gift package includes a CPAP bed pillow, CPAP tubing, mask cleaning wipes and CPAP filters
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211

A Message to All Non-Profit Groups in Nova Scotia

In Nova Scotia, a wide variety of human, social and health related services are offered by local community groups, non-profit agencies and government departments. Finding the right service at the right time though, can be a real challenge.

Beginning next February, a "211" service will provide Nova Scotians with a free, confidential information and referral program for the thousands of these services provided across the province. It will be available throughout the province, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year by simply dialling "2-1-1" to speak to a helpful staff member, or by searching our on line database, which will be up and running when 211 launches.

To help Nova Scotians in every community find and make good use of your services and programs, we need complete and accurate information. We want to ensure all services provided by community groups have been included for each and every community in Nova Scotia.

211 Nova Scotia is inviting all non-profit providers of human, social and health related services in communities throughout the province to contact us to confirm that the 211 database has the right information about your service.

We are a non-profit association – there is no cost to any organization to have information included in our database.

You can reach our team members by calling **902-466-5721** or emailing **info@ns.211.ca**. We welcome inquiries from the general public as well. Information about 211 is available on our website at **www.ns.211.ca**

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Toronto man sentenced to death in Egypt over film

Trial in absentia.
Canadian convicted of insulting Islam over alleged involvement with anti-Muslim film

A Canadian who was sentenced to death in absentia Wednesday in Cairo over an anti-Islam movie that caused deadly riots in parts of the Muslim world said he's terrified of being kidnapped and spirited to Egypt.

In an interview with The Canadian Press, Nader Fawzy denied any involvement in the Innocence of Muslims, saying the Egyptian government has long been out to get him because of his Coptic Christian activism.

"Of course I'm worried about this death penalty," said Fawzy, a jewelry-store manager and president of an international Coptic-rights organization. He came to Canada in 2002 from Sweden. He lost his Egyptian citizenship when he became a Swedish citizen in 1992, he said.

"Who will give me guarantees that the Egyptian government will not try to kidnap me to take me to Egypt?"

Fawzy, 53, of Toronto was one of seven Egyptian Coptic Christians convicted and sentenced to death Wednesday along with a Florida pastor for the low-budget movie.

Fawzy said he planned to file a lawsuit against the Egyptian government in Canada for what he said was a wrongful prosecution.

"Let them give me one (piece of evidence) that I had anything to do with that."

Egyptian authorities have had it in for him since 2007, when he published a book on anti-Coptic sentiment in Egypt called The Persecuted. He also filed a lawsuit against the Cairo government for riots in 2000 that left 23 Copts dead.

The court found all the accused guilty of harming national unity, insulting and publicly attacking Islam and spreading false information, the official Egyptian news agency said.

All of those sentenced live outside Egypt. Also convicted were Mark Basseley Youssef, the man behind the movie, and Florida pastor Terry Jones, who became well-known two years ago when he publicly burned copies of the Muslim holy book. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Full denial

"Now, as a Canadian, I'm convicted for a crime I didn't do."

Nader Fawzy, denying any involvement with the Innocence of Muslims.



Resisting a return to absolute rule in Egypt

Egyptian protesters clash with security forces near Tahrir Square, in Cairo, on Wednesday. In an escalation of the tug-of-war between Egypt's president and the powerful judiciary, judges in the country's top courts went on strike Wednesday to protest Mohammed Morsi's seizure of near absolute powers, while Islamists rushed to complete a new constitution, the issue at the heart of the dispute. KHALIL HAMRA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Harper reiterates opposition to UN vote for Palestinian state

Canada affirmed its steadfast opposition to Thursday's vote at the United Nations to confer statehood on Palestine, saying it would not support any "shortcuts" to peace with Israel.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper confirmed the decision on Wednesday with Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird bound for New York to cast Ottawa's vote and register Canada's disappointment with the latest move for recognition.

The Harper government's support of its close friend Israel was unbowed by reports that its trusted international ally, Britain, had offered to abstain from the vote in return for a pledge from the Palestinian Authority to return to the negotiating table with the Israelis.

Asked Wednesday during a press conference, Harper brushed aside all talk of the British move and reiterated his firm support for the Israeli line on the resumption of peace talks without preconditions.

Harper said Canada favours a two-state solution in the Middle East that requires the Palestinian Authority to pick up talks with Israel.

Baird said he believed the Palestinian motion would be successful "by a wide margin." But he said he would vote against it on Canada's behalf "and stand up for what we believe is right." THE CANADIAN PRESS



Protesters mock Stephen Harper in the city of Ramallah, Wednesday. MAJDI MOHAMMED/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Former SNC-Lavalin CEO arrested

Fraud charges. Arrest relates to Montreal superhospital contract

The former head of Canada's biggest engineering firm, who once mused that Quebec was taking sufficient measures to fight corruption in the construction industry, was arrested Wednesday by the squad at the centre of those efforts.

Pierre Duhaime, the former chief executive of SNC-Lavalin, was taken from his home by police in connection with alleged fraud involving one of Montreal's huge new superhospitals.

The arrest warrant alleges that Duhaime and Riasdh Ben Aissa, another former top executive, also committed conspiracy to commit fraud and uttered false documents in connection with a contract pertaining to the multibillion-dollar McGill University Health Centre. The infractions are alleged to have taken place between April 30, 2009, and Aug. 31, 2011.

Duhaime was released from custody late Wednesday and is expected to appear in court at a later date after being questioned by provincial anti-corruption squad investigators.

He walked out from provincial police headquarters around 7:45 p.m., brushing past a number of journalists, covering his face as he approached an awaiting BMW. He sat in the back seat with his head down as the car pulled away.

Squad chief Robert Lafreniere said "international proceedings" have been initiated against Ben Aissa, who is currently detained in Switzerland. Ben Aissa, SNC's former head of construction, is accused of fraud, money laundering and corrupting a public official tied to his dealings in North Africa.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

By the numbers

$5M

Duhaime received a $5-million payout after he stepped down as SNC-Lavalin's CEO last March. He was "relieved" of his duties after an independent review conducted by the company discovered he signed off on $56-million worth of payments to undisclosed agents, breaching the company's code of ethics. His departure was classified as a retirement.



Former SNC-Lavalin CEO Pierre Duhaime THE CANADIAN PRESS FILE

Attack ads. Microsoft warns holiday shoppers not to get 'scroogled'

Microsoft is trying to skewer Google as a lousy holiday shopping guide in its latest attempt to divert more traffic to its Bing search engine.

The attack started Wednesday with a marketing campaign focused on a recent change in how Google runs the part of its search engine devoted to shopping results. The revisions require merchants to pay Google to have their products listed in the shopping section.

In its new ads, Microsoft Corp. contends the new approach betrays Google Inc.'s longstanding commitment to provide the most trustworthy results on the web, even if it means forgoing revenue. To punctuate its point, Microsoft is warning consumers that they risk getting "scroogled" if they rely on Google's shopping search service.

The message will be highlighted in TV commercials that will run on NBC and CNN and newspaper ads in The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and The Washington Post. The blitz also will appear on billboards and online, anchored by a new site, Scroogled.com.

The barbs are likely to inject more antagonism into an already bitter rivalry between two of the world's best-known and most powerful technology companies. Google's search engine is dominant on the Internet, with Bing running a distant second. Microsoft's Office and Windows software remains an integral part of personal computers, but Google has been reducing the importance of those programs and PCs with the success of web-based services and its Android operating system for smartphones and tablet computers. Google still doesn't require websites to pay to be listed in its main database.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Central-banking brouhaha. British press gleefully puts Carneys through wringer

Bank of Canada Governor Mark Carney's wife is an eco-warrior with left-wing views? Who knew?

Welcome to the British press! London's leading newspapers have been having a field day putting Carney under the microscope, examining everything from his monetary policies to his personal life, since the stunning news a Canadian would be taking over as head of the Bank of England. Among the stories published in The Telegraph Tuesday was "Ten facts about Diana Carney, wife of the new Bank of England Governor Mark Carney." It revealed, among other things, that she runs a website, called ecoproductsthatwork.com, where she provides tips on gardening pots made from fired cow dung and where to buy $10 vegan shoes.

On a more serious note, the story also noted the British-born mother of four girls was educated at Oxford and works as vice-president, research, at Canada 2020, an independent, progressive think-tank based in Ottawa.

Another Telegraph column goes a step further and attempts to explain Canada to the British, pointing out we're known for more than Mounties and maple syrup and that Carney is not the country's only bright light. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE



British tabloids are notorious for their relentless pursuit of private details about celebrities, the Royal Family and anyone else in the spotlight. GETTY IMAGES FILE

Market Minute

DOLLAR 100.82¢ (+0.29¢)

TSX 12,140.33 (+28.70)

OIL $86.49 US (-69¢)

GOLD $1,716.50 US (-$25.80)

Natural gas: $3.81 (-8¢)
Dow Jones: 12,985.11 (+106.98)

BP cut out of new U.S. federal contracts



Pools of dispersed oil collect on a section of the public beach in Grand Isle, La., a few months after the 2010 BP oil spill. Citing "a lack of business integrity" at BP, the Obama administration put a temporary stop to new federal contracts with the British oil company on Wednesday. GETTY IMAGES FILE

The Obama administration put a temporary stop to new federal contracts with British oil company BP on Wednesday, citing the company's "lack of business integrity" and criminal proceedings stemming from the Deepwater Horizon disaster in 2010.

The action by the Environmental Protection Administration won't affect current contracts, but prevents BP and its affiliates from new government contracts "until the company can provide sufficient evidence to EPA demonstrating that it meets federal business standards," the agency said.

"EPA is taking this action due to BP's lack of business integrity as demonstrated by the company's conduct with regard to the Deepwater Horizon blowout, explosion, oil spill, and response," the agency said in a statement.

In London, BP said it had no immediate comment but expected to make a statement later Wednesday.

The suspension came the same day two BP rig supervisors and a former executive were arraigned on criminal charges stemming from the deadly explosion and the company's response to the resulting oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. The three men are charged with manslaughter in the deaths of 11 rig workers. They all pleaded not guilty on Wednesday.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

By the numbers

$4.5B

BP announced earlier in November that it will plead guilty to manslaughter, obstruction of Congress and other charges and pay a record $4.5 billion US in penalties to resolve a Justice Department probe of the disaster.

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STRIKE THE SHOPPERS AND JOIN THE CHORUS



HE SAYS...
John Mazerolle
metronews.ca

Oh, joy! It's once again that magical time of year when we get into the "spirit" of Christmas — so called because Christmas, as it was once understood, is dead by the end of November, either killed by the Gods of Consumerism or trampled to death at a shopping mall by people clambering for this year's must-have present: Restraining Order Elmo. Fa la la la la la la la la.

It all began last week, with people in their stretchiest shopping pants crawling all over each other during Grey Thursday, Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, Paisley Sunday, Cyber Monday, The Tantalizing Tremendous and Transcendent Tues-tacular, and Wednesday.

Wednesday!

The Black Friday weekend has become the unofficial "starting gun" of the Christmas shopping season, though that bang you heard was probably just a Walmart greeter firing a warning shot into the air. Giving like Santa and saving like Scrooge might be the goal, but a lot of people just trample like nine angry reindeer.

When I was doing research for this column, I tried to type Christmas-shopping statistics into Google, but it auto-filled to Christmas-shopping safety tips.

This made perfect sense.

Watching the Black Friday swarm move through a mall like locusts — leaving behind employees wearing nothing but their smiley-face pins — is fascinating but frightening.

It occurs to me how fitting it is that the 1978 horror allegory Dawn of the Dead was a film about a shopping mall full of flesh-eating zombies that shuffled slowly in a slack-jawed, aimless stupor but that the more recent remake had fast zombies bounding through the mall in a quick, deadly crush. While the first film was clearly meant to mock the day's spirit of consumerism, I think the echo of fast, awful crowds in the second film was just good luck. Living death imitates art.

And all the more fitting since Christmas advertising now starts on Halloween.

The festivities used to kick into gear after Remembrance Day, but I suspect in the future we'll just tell kids the story of how The Veterans Saved Christmas while we enjoy our seasonal Peppermint poppy mochas.

The worst part of all for me is that, despite my non-believer status, I really like Christmas. I like the lights and the outdoor markets and most of the music, and so it kills me a little to see people getting all mobby over stuff they'll forget about by Jan. 3.

The more violent aspects seem solely American so far, but we might not be far behind. There were zombies lined up outside Canadian malls at 6 a.m. on Black Friday, because we saw the old ladies hurting each other on the TV and naturally thought, We want some of that.

In the spirit of Christmas giving, might I suggest that we return the favour by giving Americans our Boxing Day sales? Given their track record, they'll enjoy another shopping day while making the name more apt than ever.

Deck your fellow patrons

The more violent aspects seem solely American so far, but we might not be far behind. There were zombies lined up outside Canadian malls at 6 a.m. on Black Friday, because we saw the old ladies hurting each other on the TV and naturally thought, We want some of that.



Customers wait in line to enter Best Buy on Black Friday in Fort Worth, Texas. According to recent data, Black Friday is expected to attract zombies to Canadian malls by 2014. TOM PENNINGTON/GETTY IMAGES

Still trying to impress Olive Oyl



STEPHAN SAVOIA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ripped

Hey, Popeye, where's your pipe?

Don't tell Popeye. It turns out you don't need to eat your spinach to get the world's biggest arms. Bodybuilder Moustafa Ismail insists they are all-natural, the result of a punishing workout regimen he started after a guest at his uncle's wedding in his native Egypt mocked his overweight frame.

"They call me Popeye, the Egyptian Popeye," Ismail, 24, said while working out in the Boston suburb of Milford. But unlike the cartoon character, "I like chicken, beef — anything but spinach."

It's not easy having the world's biggest arms.

Skeptics say there must also be steroids or some other artificial means behind Ismail's beyond-bulging biceps and triceps, and Guinness World Records is now waffling on whether to recognize him.

Controversy ensued when Guinness decided to recognize him as having the largest upper-arm muscles. In response to critics, they are now conducting research with medical specialists and reviewing Ismail's category.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Big guns

- Ismail started building his muscles in his Egyptian hometown of Alexandria before moving to the United States in 2007 and settling in Franklin, southwest of Boston.
- To pay for his gym membership and daily dietary requirements, he worked two jobs as a gas-station attendant, but gave up one after his wife began to complain that he was pushing himself too hard.

No sweat

31 inches

Ismail eats three kilograms of protein and four kilograms of carbohydrates, and drinks 11 litres of water each day to help maintain upper arms that measure 31 inches around — as big as a small man's waist. Generous amounts of poultry, seafood and shakes provide the protein he needs to fuel daily two-hour workouts in which he lifts as much as 600 pounds.

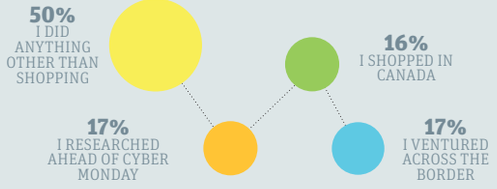
Online

Watch the video at metronews.ca

Metropolitan Panel

Register at metropolitanpanel.ca and take the quick poll

What did you do on Black Friday?



Twitter

@17_4awhile:
Dear Halifax: We are about to have the 1st snowfall of the year. Don't muck up rush hour by being stupid! Good tires, slow down & think!! :P

@evilpez4:
Remember the scene in Bambi where he experiences ice for the first time? That's Halifax traffic this afternoon. #FIRSTSNOWMAGEDDON

@esquire_7:
What the F is wrong with #halifax motorists?! Almost hit twice today in crosswalks. #ishouldsticktojaywalking

@spcushing:
Happy to welcome the 'HaliDeli' to the North-end. What a great experience. #Halifax

@HfxProblms:
The Sleepwatcher "Gets off" again. Am I alone in thinking our Justice System is built to protect the criminals?

metro

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Actor puts his swirly twirly stamp on production of Elf

Christmas camp. Mark Uhre stars in the Neptune Theatre's run of Elf: The Musical, a deviation from more classic holiday fare



BACKSTAGE PASS
Jenna Conter
halifax@metronews.ca



Mark Uhre plays Buddy the elf in Elf: The Musical. JEFF HARPER

If Nathan Lane and Sheldon Cooper had a baby, and allowed Will Ferrell to babysit, that child would be Mark Uhre, who plays Buddy in Neptune's production of Elf: The Musical.

"The trap is not to be just that movie character simply moved to stage," Uhre said as we chatted in the Neptune Theatre lobby.

"That's not going to serve the audience or yourself as an actor."

Bitten by the theatre bug early in life, Uhre invested in his talent, eventually attending theatre school across the pond for three years. Returning to Toronto, Uhre was cast as Sky in Mama Mia.

"There are so many movies that are reaching live audiences in a completely different way," he said.

"The public loves it, so I think it's a stage in entertainment that's certainly a lucrative and interesting trend."

Uhre's resume also includes a six-year stint at the famous Shaw Festival Theatre.

"I've been very, very fortunate to be working consistently in theatre — very, very lucky."

Luck has nothing to do with it.

In Elf, Uhre successfully merges the child-like naivety of Buddy with the real-world struggle of finding himself and his father.

Having a grown man think he's an Elf wandering the streets of New York is a far cry from the classic holiday theatre of A Christmas Carol and The Nutcracker.

However, as Uhre points out, there are still classic elements of traditional holiday theatre in this production.

"You're looking at the growth of a boy into a man and also looking at a family. So in terms of whatever faith or religion, there's a huge family connection and element to this story," he said.

"A boy goes to find his dad and find out who he really is — I think that can resonate with everyone."

If you go...

- **What.** Elf: The Musical
- **When.** Runs through Jan. 6 at Neptune Theatre
- **Tickets.** Visit neptunetheatre.com

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Payday loans are high cost loans. New customers can get a $200 Cash Advance for $20 on their first advance only. Loan amounts are subject to met pay and other qualification requirements and this offer is available for new customers only that are Nova Scotia residents. Under this offer for a $200 loan, the cost of borrowing for the payday loan is $10.00 for each $100 advanced for a 14-day term. As such, under this offer for a loan of $200 for 14 days the cost of borrowing is $20.00 with a total payback amount of $220.00 and APR of 260.71%. Regular fees apply on subsequent loans and the cost of borrowing for a $200 loan for 14 days would be $44 with a total payback amount of $244.00 and APR of $71.67%. For a $300 loan for a term of 14 days made under this offer, the cost of borrowing would be $20 on the first $200 advanced and $22 on the next $100 advanced for a total cost of borrowing of $42 with a total payback amount of $342 and APR of 365%. The maximum allowable cost of borrowing under payday loan agreements in Nova Scotia $25 per each $100 advanced.

Ray Liotta treads softly in his latest mob role

New movie. Best known for his bad guy roles, Liotta flips the script in Killing Them Softly as he becomes a good guy mobster

HEIDI PATALANO
Metro World News

Ray Liotta knows how to give a hell of a fake beating. He's also good at taking one, as he does in his latest film — mobster drama Killing Them Softly. Though fans are still asking him to say lines from his iconic role in 1994's Goodfellas, the New Jersey native doesn't mind slipping back into the role of a gangster for Andrew Dominik's new film, especially since, as he says, he's playing a good gangster this time around.

In this film, the mob underworld serves as a microcosm for the country as a whole. So many people felt victimized by the 2008 financial crisis, which is when this film is set. The mobsters who get ripped off in the card game robberies represent the general public. What do you think is the allegorical message of all of that?
Just that everybody needs money. Everybody got hit. I'm not sure, but I guess it happens to all walks of life. You don't think of it as maybe hurting people who do illegal things, but it stands to reason (the effect of the crisis), I guess, would be across the board — good guys and bad guys.

It's refreshing how the film places the mob in the context of the crisis. Is that one of the things that attracted you to this role?
That was in the book … But that's not why I did it. I did it more just because it was a really interesting story and it was nice to play somebody who was the victim as opposed to the aggressor. It was different in terms of the bad guys that I've played.

What was the strangest mob story you've been asked to do?
I get to play cops — bad cops, some bad guys. I've only played two guys who were in the mob, Goodfellas and then I've got one coming out, Ice Man, which is a really good movie. I was asked to do The Sopranos, but it just wasn't the right time to do it. In the beginning of my career, I handled it very delicately in terms of limiting the bad guys. The irony of it all is I've never been in a fight in my whole life, yet I play and they ask me to do these kinds of guys.

Quoted

"Everybody got hit. I'm not sure, but I guess it happens to all walks of life. You don't think of it as maybe hurting people who do illegal things, but it stands to reason (the effect of the crisis), I guess, would be across the board."
Ray Liotta
Talking about the 2008 financial crisis.





Director Peter Jackson poses with his daughter Katie on the red carpet at the premiere of his new film The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey, in New Zealand. ROSS SETFORD/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Ray Liotta stars in the latest mobster drama Killing Them Softly. HANDOUT

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Hobbit fans revelling in Jackson's latest

Coming to theatres. Fans and actors laud most recent effort from Jackson, who credits unusual shooting style for success

Wearing elf ears and wizard hats, sitting atop their dad's shoulders or peering from balconies, tens of thousands of New Zealanders watched their favourite Hobbit actors walk the red carpet Wednesday at the film trilogy's hometown premiere.

An Air New Zealand plane freshly painted with Hobbit characters flew low over Wellington's Embassy Theatre, eliciting roars of approval from the crowd.

Sam Rashidmardani, 12, said he came to see Gollum actor Andy Serkis walk the red carpet — and he wasn't disappointed.

"It was amazing," Rashidmardani said of the evening, adding his Gollum impression: "My precious."

British actor Martin Freeman, who brings comedic timing to the lead role of Bilbo Baggins, said he thought director Peter Jackson had done a fantastic job on The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey.

"He's done it again," Freeman said in an interview on the red carpet.

"If it's possible, it's probably even better than The Lord of the Rings. I think he's surpassed it."

Quoted

"I really think 48 frames is pretty terrific and I'm looking forward to seeing the reaction."

Peter Jackson
Director of The Hobbit.

While it is unusual for a city so far from Hollywood to host the premiere of a hoped-for blockbuster, Jackson's filming of his lauded LOTR trilogy and now The Hobbit in New Zealand has helped create a film industry here. The film will open in theatres around the world next month.

One of the talking points of the film is the choice by Jackson to shoot it using 48 frames per second instead of the traditional 24 in hopes of improving the picture quality.

Some say the images come out too clear and look so realistic that they take away from the magic of the film medium. Jackson likens it to advancing from vinyl records to CDs.

"I really think 48 frames is pretty terrific and I'm looking forward to seeing the reaction," Jackson said on the red carpet. "It's been talked about for so long, but finally the film is being released and people can decide for themselves."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Alicia Keys presents new side of herself

New album. Singer talks about the making of her fifth album, her son jumping on a track with her and re-designing who she is

Alicia Keys will make you cry. Cry hard.

That's what happened when a close friend listened to the song Brand New Me, a personal piano-tune from Keys' new album that she calls her autobiography. On it, she sings about being herself, even if others don't approve.

"When I looked up from playing it, she was crying and she was like, 'Why didn't you warn me?' It caught her off-guard," Keys recalled in an interview.

"There's something about a time in your life that we all go through — if you haven't gone through it you will — that you find you're going to rise above something that's kind of held you back and you find this thing inside of you that really says, 'I'm new now.'"

Keys' life has changed tremendously since she recorded The Element of Freedom three years ago.

She's now a mother and Broadway producer, and has dealt with her first major tabloid drama, involving her relationship with her husband, producer-rapper Swizz Beatz, and his ex-wife.

And the 31-year-old Keys, who rarely collaborates with other singers, is working with new players: Girl on Fire, out this week, features Bruno Mars, Frank Ocean, Jamie xx, Nicki Minaj, Emeli Sande, Babyface, Dr. Dre, John Legend and Maxwell.

Quoted

"We were in the studio working on it, and he came in and he was kind of seeing us sing and writing it, and so he wanted to see the mic, so I passed it to him and he started talking on it."

Alicia Keys
Talking about her son joining her on a track.



Alicia Keys showcases a new side of herself on her latest album. GETTY IMAGES

"I'm just way more open all around, and I really wanted to work with some different people this time that could really accentuate what I do," she said.

Keys talked about her fifth album, new haircut and two-year-old son.

What was it like writing Brand New Me, since the lyrics are so direct?
I think the whole album is more lyrical than ever before and I definitely think it is on a deeper level. ... Maybe it's more accessible, or maybe I've given more access to myself.
I think the real thing is I'm clearer about who I am, myself and what I feel. And I think probably when I was younger, maybe you have more of a sense of wanting to save a part of yourself or hide a part of yourself, or protect a part of yourself or something like that, and that's just natural.

One more question

Has the songwriting process changed for you over the years?

- **Answer.** It does change. The approach changes depending on different times. My last record, Element, it was more like, I was so into sounds and sonics, I was so into how to create more sonic places to go to and experiment. I think the songwriting process came almost second to the sonics of it.

Your son is featured on When It's All Over. How did that happen?
We were in the studio working on it, and he came in and he was kind of seeing us sing and writing it, and so he wanted to see the mic, so I passed it to him and he started talking on it. But this is when he was like a year and three months, so what first was on there was kind of just the first words he was saying, but as time progressed and we were about to wrap the album, I was like, 'I really gotta get Egypt on ... because he's two now, he has a lot to say, he has a personality.' And so I brought him back into the studio ... and you'll notice, I'll ask him what's his name and he says, 'Showtime' (laughs). So for those that know my husband, you'll understand what that means.

You cut your hair. How does it feel?
I love this hair. I love it chopped off. I love all the things I can do with it.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS





CHOOSE A BREAK THROUGH DEAL
O'REGAN'S DRIVING HIGHER STANDARDS
NISSAN HALIFAX DARTMOUTH



Angus T. Jones ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Two and a Half Men actor Angus T. Jones apologizes over 'filth' remark

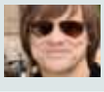
Two and a Half Men star Angus T. Jones is doing damage control following his remarks during an interview with a Christian website in which he called the hit show "filth" and urged fans not to watch it. Jones released a statement this week aiming to smooth things over with his bosses and co-workers — though he pointedly didn't take back what he said. "I apologize if my remarks reflect me showing indifference to and disrespect of my colleagues and a lack of appreciation of the extraordinary opportunity of which I have been blessed," Jones' statement reads. "I never intended that."

Twitter


@jtimberlake
Memphis ... I love you. Always good to come home. Thanksgiving has got to be the best holiday. Also, I'm a pig.


@pattyduke_id
Have any of you heard or seen an article on twitter going to start charging a fee. Let me know, got a tweet saying it, but might be hacker


@JonahHill
Now I'm watching Black Swan and this movie is crazy and amazing


@JimCarrey
Archeologists are now saying that the visit of the 3 Magi to baby Jesus did happen but that the myrrh may have been a regift!

METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

The Word



That was quick! Jessica Simpson is pregnant again


THE WORD
Dorothy Robinson
scene@metronews.ca

Whoa. Here's some news I didn't see coming: Jessica Simpson is pregnant, again.

Seven months after giving birth to daughter Maxwell, Jessica Simpson is reportedly already expecting another child, according to Us Weekly. "It definitely wasn't planned," a source says. "But yes, Jessica is pregnant again." This would be the second baby for Simpson and fiancé Eric Johnson. A rep for Simpson has yet to comment.

Oh man, you guys. This brings up so many questions, mainly: What was she thinking? But also: Is she taking cues from notorious quick-turnaround-breeder Tori Spelling? (Ed note: Never, ever take life tips from Tori Spelling.) What will happen to her multimillion dollar campaign with Weight Watchers? Because you know girlfriend isn't going to slim down anytime soon. And does this mean we're all going to be subjected to photos of her being gigantic yet again? As someone who has a seven-month-old at home, I'm down with pregnant ladies and have nothing but respect for them, but my Us Weekly just finally stopped running photos of her waddling around L.A. Hey, paparazzi — I think we (and probably Jessica Simpson) could use a little break. Let's let her gestate in peace this go round, OK?


Gabriel Aubry

Gabriel Aubry fails to have restraining order from Halle Berry lifted

Gabriel Aubry's efforts to have the restraining order against him lifted following a Thanksgiving brawl with ex-girlfriend Halle Berry's fiancé, Olivier Martinez, have failed, with a judge denying his request to dismiss the ban, according to TMZ. The order, which requires Aubry to stay at least 100 yards away from Martinez, Berry and the four-year-old daughter Aubry shares with Berry, Nahla, is set to expire today due to a clerical error, though Berry is expected to file a request to extend the ban.


Dolly Parton

Parton rubbishes gay best friend rumours

Despite being married to Carl Dean for 46 years, Dolly Parton has been dogged by rumours romantically linking her to best friend Judy Ogly for years. "Judy and I have been best friends since we were like in the third and fourth grade," Parton says in an interview with ABC's Nightline. "We still just have a great friendship and relationship and I love her as much as I love anybody in the whole world, but we're not romantically involved." On the plus side, the persistent rumours did give Parton something she could bond over with Oprah Winfrey: "Like Gayle (King), her friend, Judy, my friend, they just think that you just can't be that close to somebody," Parton says.

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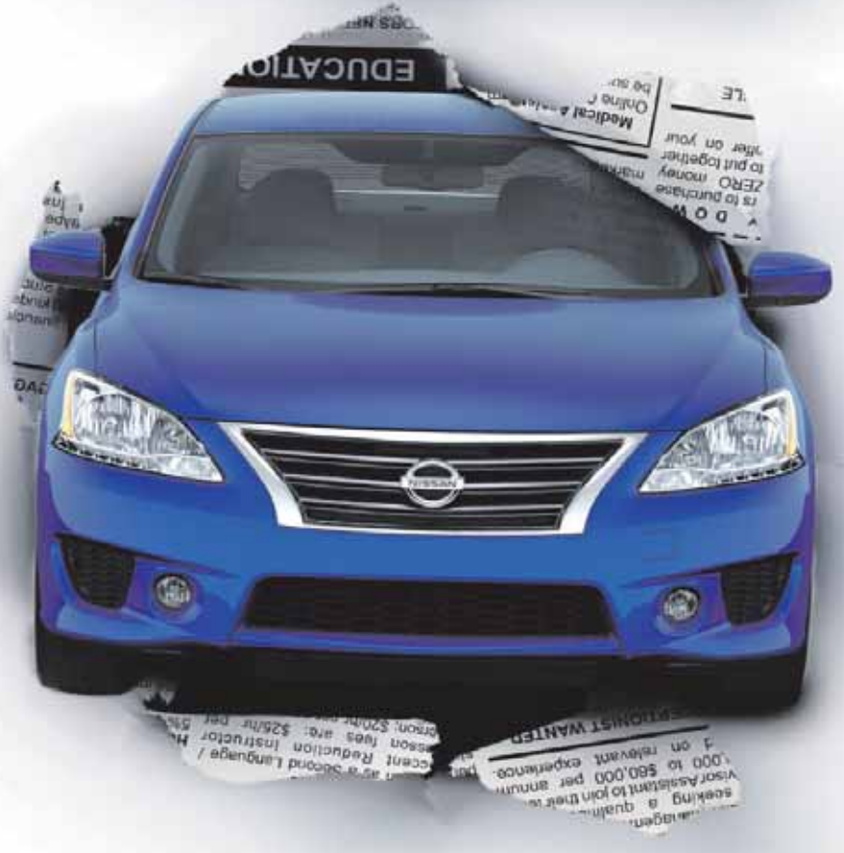




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KENYA HUNT
life@metronews.ca



Meet the one-stop-shop of tops. MICHELLE BOBB-PARRIS



Natalie Massenet GETTY



DKNY
satin bomber jacket, $595, netaporter.com

Suno
$696, sunony.com





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Aztec print bomber, $130, topshop.com

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jacket, $349, zara.com





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@Jeanne_Beker: At the CTV Bellmedia Queen St. W. bldg+something big, new+exciting is brewing! Our release goes out at noon. Stay tuned!!

@Jeanne_Beker: The word is out: We"re launching theLoop.ca by Sympatico Dec. 13th

@Jeanne_Beker: TheLoop.ca will be a cutting edge lifestyle destination with plenty of style to keep you satiated!



@Jeanne_Beker: With the inspiring +lovely Senator Linda Frum. Just interviewed her at the Harold Green Theatre.



@Jeanne_Beker: Just 2 of the many FANTABULOUS prs of shoes that the divine @ConradNadeau has brought for our shoot.



@Jeanne_Beker: Bekky @qualityslippers graciously agrees to don @EDITbyJeanneB Spring 2013 for a quick shot!



@Jeanne_Beker: So many shots to choose from @EDITbyJeanneB for spring! Love @Mackenzie_ photo too. :)

The Kit

Canadian street style



Spotted in: Toronto

Freya Bernales
Architectural draftsperson
Age: 23

What she's wearing
Zara jacket, Tiffany necklace, Forever 21 shirt, H&M jeans, Lola Shoetique shoes, Marc Jacobs bag, Ray Ban glasses

Her inspiration
"I try to avoid trends in favour of more classic looks — things I can mix and match easily."

THE KIT PHOTOBLOGGER: TIFFANY TRINIDAD, TIFFANYTRINIDAD.COM

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Buying your first home: A major life milestone

Are you a property virgin? Your real estate goals could be closer than you think

EMMA GODMERE
life@metronews.ca


Buying your first home doesn't have to be scary. ISTOCK IMAGES

Owning your first home is a major milestone. Buying property is likely one of the first significant investments you'll ever make — and it's an investment that you get to enjoy while it appreciates.

For young people in particular, the idea of getting a mortgage can feel like an insurmountable obstacle amid the reality of student and consumer debt, but your real estate goals don't have to be as far away as you think.

"You can never start too early," says Mark Salerno, corporate representative with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. "If you start early enough, you're going to know the degree of challenge that you're going to have."

Salerno suggests first meeting with your bank to assess what kind of mortgage you might qualify for. Some hopeful homeowners may need to address debt and income concerns before taking the plunge, but banks and credit counselling agencies can help you become a better mortgage candidate.

If you're given the green light, the next task is finding a realtor.

Realtors will be able to shed light on market conditions, trends and prices, and help you comb through real estate listings.

A good place to start is with the Canadian Real Estate Association, which can link you to a realtor in your area. Realtors can also connect you to other important individuals like home inspectors and help negotiate a deal when you're ready to buy.

Some financial analysts may suggest renting a home is a better long-term approach, but while Salerno agrees it can be the more affordable option, he emphasizes the benefits of investing in your own piece of real estate are worth the purchase.

"The market, on average, over time appreciates and you then have a means to build equity in your home," he says. "If you're in a renting situation, you're paying a mortgage — but it's your landlord's mortgage."

Start sharing

This is the fourth in a week-long series of articles chronicling some of the rites of passage many of Metro's readers will experience as they leave the nest or school and head out on their own.

How did you find your first apartment? Any tips you'd like to share? Visit metronews.ca/features/firsts, tweet us or even turn to the person next to you and share your stories.

Three things to consider when looking for a new home

- Do you want a new home or a resale home? New homes will offer more up-to-date features, but can incur extra costs like GST or HST, for which there's no rebate if the house is more than $450,000. Resale homes may need renovations, but are most likely surrounded by established neighbourhoods.
- Is the neighbourhood sustainable? A sustainable neighbourhood ideally offers affordable homes, access to public transit, and proximity to schools, shops and work. Residents in sustainable neighbourhoods should also be able to choose healthier transportation options, like walking and cycling.
- How much space do you need when it comes to bedrooms, bathrooms, storage, and outdoor areas? The CMHC recommends buying a home that meets most of your projected needs for the next five to 10 years.



Unlikely trio of almonds, cherries and wild rice wows

1. In saucepan over medium heat, warm olive oil. Add onions and sauté 5 minutes. Add sausage and garlic and cook until browned and cooked through. Remove from heat and add parsley, thyme, rosemary, dried cherries and almonds. Stir in wild rice; add salt and pepper to taste.

2. Preheat oven to 350 F (180 C). Spread filleted pork loin out on a clean work surface. Top pork loin with prepared stuffing from edge to edge. Starting from the short side, roll pork loin and stuffing into a spiral.

3. Tie roll together with heavy-duty kitchen string in centre and at two ends. Place roast on rack in a shallow roasting pan and sprinkle generously with salt and pepper. Insert an oven-safe meat thermometer into the centre of the roast and cook for 1 hour. Reduce heat to 325 F (160 C) and continue to cook for another 45 to 60 minutes.

4. Remove roast from the oven once the meat thermometer reaches 160 F (71 C). Allow meat to rest in the pan, loosely covered with foil for 20 to 30 minutes.

5. Remove from pan and cut twine away from the roast. Slice to your desired thickness and serve.

NEWS CANADA/ ALMOND BOARD

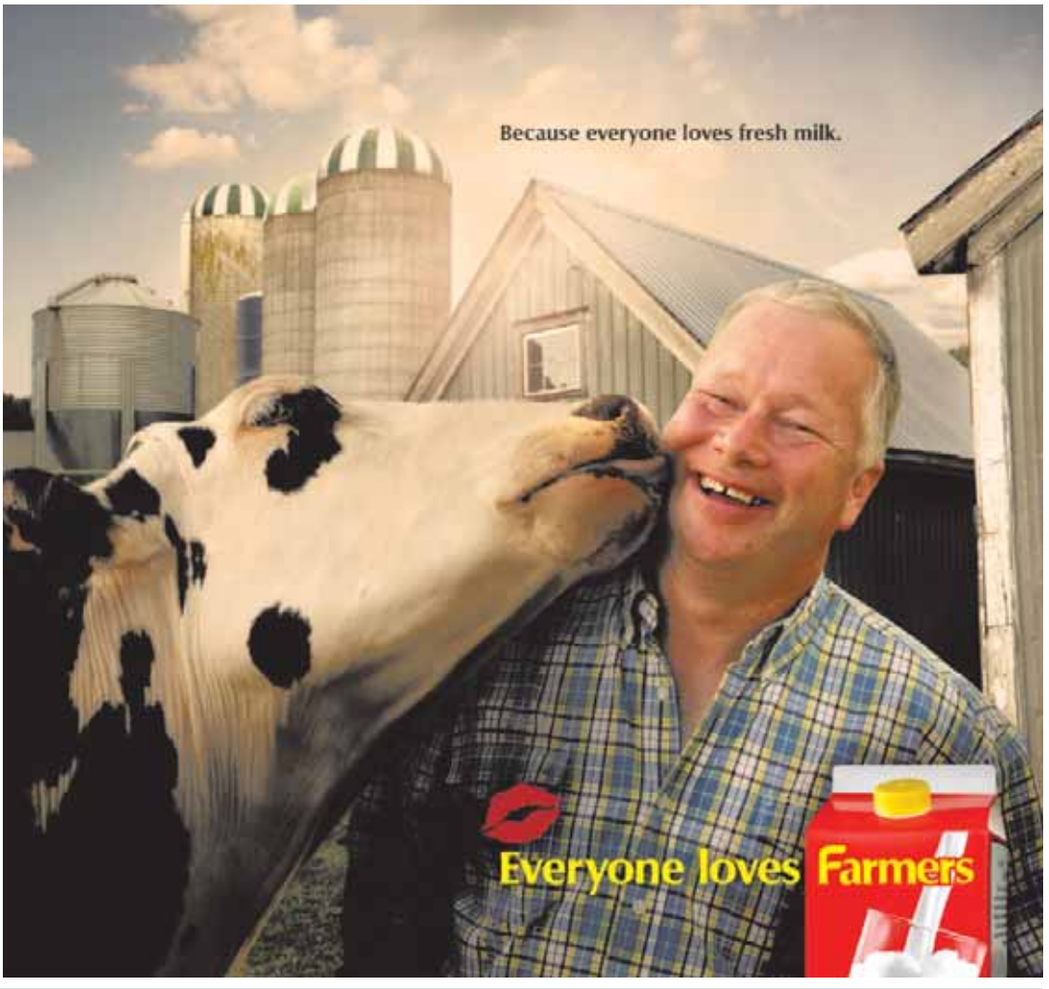
Ingredients

- 2 tbsp (30 ml) olive oil
- 1 small yellow onion, diced
- 6 oz (170 g) Italian sausage, removed from casing
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup (50 ml) chopped parsley
- 1 tbsp (15 ml) each chopped fresh thyme and rosemary
- 1/3 cup (75 ml) coarsely chopped dried cherries
- 1/2 cup (125 ml) coarsely chopped roasted almonds
- 1 cup (250 ml) cooked wild rice
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 1/2 lb (1.1 kgs) boneless pork loin, filleted
- Kitchen twine for wrapping
- Salt and pepper for topping



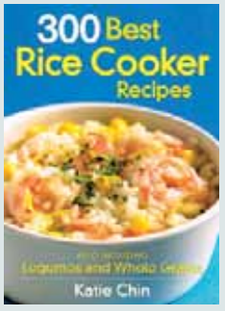
Cherry, Almond and Wild-Rice-Stuffed Pork Loin

This recipe serves six to eight. NEWS CANADA



Cookbook of the Week

Rice up your dinner



The recipes in 300 Best Rice Cooker Recipes by Katie Chin are inspired by flavours from around the corner and around the world. They also prove that every type of meal can be prepared in a rice cooker, from appetizers, soups and salads to main dishes, one pot meals and side dishes.

Delicious and time-saving recipes, perfect for busy working families and gourmet cooks alike include: Grits Jambalaya, Roasted Corn and Quinoa Salad, Chocolate Banana Oatmeal, White Chipotle Turkey Chili, Lemony Risotto with Shrimp and more. **METRO**

Asian Barley and Wild Rice Salad

1. In a large saucepan, bring wild rice and chicken broth to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes. Add barley and continue simmering an additional 40 minutes. Cover and let stand until all moisture is absorbed. Let cool.

2. In a large serving bowl, place barley mixture. Add remaining ingredients except pecans and mix well. Cover and refrigerate for 2 hours or overnight. Add pecans just before serving.

THE CANADIAN PRESS/ ALBERTA BARLEY COMMISSION

Ingredients

- 250 ml (1 cup) wild rice
- 1 l (4 cups) chicken broth
- 250 ml (1 cup) pot or pearl barley
- 75 ml (1/3 cup) soy sauce
- 75 ml (1/3 cup) rice vinegar
- 50 ml (1/4 cup) sesame oil
- 2 medium red peppers, chopped
- 50 ml (1/4 cup) chopped green onions
- 500 ml (2 cups) frozen corn, thawed
- 500 ml (2 cups) chopped pecans

Ch-ch-ch-chia! Seeds star in pudding



This recipe serves four. MATTHEW MEAD/ THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The trouble with this underappreciated ingredient is that for the next few days you're going to have its only-available-on-TV jingle stuck in your head. Ch-ch-ch-chia! That's right, we've wandered into the Chia Pet aisle. Because the same seeds used to grow fluffy green pets also happen to be delicious and nutritious.

Chia seeds resemble poppy seeds, but with a nuttier, less assertive flavour. They have gobs of fibre and a fair amount of protein.

Chia seeds' reputation for providing sustained energy — as well as plenty of nutrients — more recently have turned them into the darling of the fitness world.

They also have shown up in a growing number of products in natural foods shops, from protein bars and baked goods to drinks. You can also try them in this delicious pudding.

Top the pudding with whipped cream and a sprinkle of chia seeds. Or drizzle it with a bit of honey or agave syrup.

1. In bowl, combine all ingredients. Stir well. Leave bowl on the counter and stir once a minute for about 10 minutes. This prevents the seeds from clumping as they absorb liquid. Cover and refrigerate the bowl for at least 6 hours, or ideally overnight. When you think of it, give the pudding a stir.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ingredients

- 2 cups vanilla almond milk
- 1 1/2 tablespoons chia seeds
- Zest of 1 lemon
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- Pinch of salt

HOLIDAY 2012
gift guide

26 shopping days left

Take a byte out of the holidays



Galaxy Nexus 10 — $399.99 and up, below, Sony Vaio Tap 20 — $1,089.99, bottom right, New iMac — $1,299 and up, bottom left.

MIKE YAWNEY
For Metro

Computers and tablets are always popular gifts during the holidays. Unfortunately, people are often lured by sales and promotions and fall into the trap of buying the wrong one.

Here's a look at the best tablets and computers so you don't disappoint your loved one this holiday season.

iPad Mini — $329 and up

All the features of Apple's iPad in a model you can hold in one hand. The iPad Mini is the perfect tablet for those on the move. It's small-form factor and light weight means you can stuff it into any bag or purse, yet it can do everything a full-sized iPad can do.



Surface — $499 and up

Microsoft's Surface has features not seen on other tablets. For starters, it comes preloaded with Windows 8, a new take on the classic stuffy operating system. A built-in kickstand gives you freedom to prop it up on any surface, while the Touch Cover (sold separately) not only protects the screen, it doubles as a keyboard. Surface also has a USB port that allows connectivity to many devices, including printers.



Galaxy Nexus 10 — $399.99 and up

Behold the tablet with the amazing screen. Google's Nexus 10 sports the highest resolution on any tablet with more than 4 million pixels in your hand; that's even more than Apple's new iPad. The beautiful screen makes it perfect to use it as an entertainment device, although it will handle any work you throw at it.



New iMac — $1,299 and up

Never has a computer looked this beautiful. Apple's new iMac is a mere five millimetres thin at its outer edge and has 40 per cent less volume than the previous generation. Beautiful yes, but it's also powerful. The latest iMacs contain third-generation Intel processors and has the option of a Fusion-Drive, which combines a traditional hard drive with Flash storage to ensure the programs you use the most launch from Flash storage at lightning speed.

HP SpectreOne — $1,299

Art meets technology. HP's SpectreOne looks like a traditional all-in-one PC, but its looks are deceiving. This Windows 8 PC features a 23.6-inch monitor that is actually a 10-point touchscreen display, so you can simply touch the screen instead of using the touchpad or keyboard. The SpectreOne also features a Beats Audio headphone jack and HDMI-in so you can watch external devices on the beautiful display.



Sony Vaio Tap 20 — $1,089.99

Is it an all-in-one computer or a tablet? Well, it's both. The secret is in the battery hidden in the screen. Since you don't have to plug it in, you can take the Tap 20 anywhere and use it as a tablet. Or set it up on a flat surface, pull out the keyboard and mouse and use it as a full-fledged computer. With a 20-inch screen it's certainly a large tablet, but who says that's a bad thing.



MacBook Pro with Retina Display — $1,699 and up

Spoil your eyes with Apple's latest MacBook Pro. This 13-inch laptop features state-of-the-art processors, amazing graphics capabilities and Flash storage. But the screen is the real draw here. It may be a bit pricier than many laptops in the same size category, but once you feast your eyes on the Retina display, you will have issues using anything else. Seeing is believing.

iPad Mini — $329 and up, left, HP SpectreOne — $1,299, top, Surface — $499 and up.

Correction

The Panasonic Lumix DMC-ZS20 retails for $379 and does not have 3-D capabilities. Incorrect information appeared in last week's Holiday Gift Guide. Metro regrets the error.



Dreaming of a cosy Christmas



PJ Set,$49.95, available at Gap, gapcanada.ca.



Roots Cabin Sock Slipper, $44, available at Roots, canada.roots.com.



EMU Australia Jolie Slippers, $79, available at EMU Australia, emuaustralia.com.



La Vie En Rose Crochet Socks, $9.95 a pair, available at La Vie En Rose, lavieenrose.com.



Cotton Pyjamas, $30, available at Reitmans, reitmans.com.



Jacob Polka Dot Polar Fleece Pyjama Pants, Jacob Striped Pyjama Pants, Jacob Flower Print Pyjama Pants, $39 each, available at Jacob, jacob.ca



La Vie En Rose Short-Sleeved PJ Top With Rhinestone Martini Glass $17.95, available at La Vie En Rose, lavieenrose.com.



Women's Mustard Tank by George, $6, available at Wal-Mart, walmart.ca.



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Take aim at these video game titles

KAREN FALCON
For Metro

If you have a gamer on your list, we're here to help. We've played a bunch of stuff (all less than $60 MSRP) and narrowed it down to the hottest titles available this holiday season. Just remember to buy two — one for them, and one for you.



A screen shot from Assassin's Creed III, the third game in the series that features vast expanses to play in as well as a plethora of weapons. CONTRIBUTED

FOR THE TEEN GAMER AND OLDER:

Borderlands 2
Multi-platform: M

Best shooter! Best RPG! Best DLC (with promises of more)! Best characters! Best (and most) guns in all of video game land! We're pretty sure this is the best of everything and it's all rolled into one package of awesomeness. I don't know how else to tell you this might be "the" game to gift. It's just that good. The single player is grand, the co-op is equally as grand, and the DLC just makes me smile. Not sure if you have heard, but lootin' 'n shootin' are the most fantastic things since sliced bread. Well, that and reloading, tossing out the empty clip, and having it explode like a grenade. We don't think there's anything more enjoyable than reloading and yelling "frag out." Nope, nuthin'.



Halo 4
Xbox 360: M

Wake up, Master Chief! Wake up! It's time to wander around space in your Spartan suit while looking really cool, shooting aliens, and being surrounded with the best graphics we've seen in recent memory. Wow — just wow. Full of everything you expect from the franchise plus a whole lot more — this instalment is the beginning of a whole new saga to save mankind. With new enemies and new ways to track your stats, you can co-op and/or multiplayer your way through this award-winning blockbuster game all the way into 2014.



And you know you can make your own multiplayer maps, too, right?

Assassin's Creed III
Multi-platform: M

Free-running is where it's at and you'll need to set aside three solid weeks of your life to do it. Set in Boston, New York, and the frontier, overflowing with incredible attention to detail, the third game in this series does not disappoint. With a new engine, vast expanses to play in, tree canopies to run through, beavers to assassinate, and ships to sail across the seas, staying incognito has never been a more enjoyable challenge. As America's first highly trained Master Assassin, you get a plethora of weapons: Swords, a bow and arrow, some rope darts, a bunch of other stuff, and a tomahawk. Tomahawks are fun — you'll see.



Forza Horizon
Xbox 360: T

Dirt tracks, music festivals, and graphics that will knock your socks off — yes, Forza Horizon is all that and more. No longer the straight-laced racing sim you've come to associate with the name Forza, this title is more like an open-world, racing fun exploring explosion. With hidden cars, 250 events, and a solid AI that takes solo or multiplayer racing into a whole new experience, new fans and old will be driving through signs, painting their cars, destroying some landscaping, and racing their dream cars against aeroplanes. Yes, I said aeroplanes. So good.







Fun for the entire family

KAREN FALCON
For Metro

More hot video game titles, this time for the kid gamer (and their parents, too).

Lego The Lord of The Rings
Multi-platform: E10+
Take a little hobbit, turn him into Lego, give him a bunch of friends and a shovel, send him out into a vast Lego universe to protect a ring, and you end up with a monumental adventure full of epic battles, Lego bows, and Lego swords. With more playable characters than you can shake a wizard at, this two-player drop-in/drop-out action-adventure game can be played pretty much until your hands fall off. What's cuter than a Lego hobbit? Mom playing as Gandalf, that's what.

And then there's motion-sensitive gaming. It's like crack for kids. But it's magic — they don't know they're learning stuff but they are. Education and gaming together, you say? How? Specifically for the Xbox 360, it's the Kinect Sensor peripheral ($109 MSRP), and the following whack of engaging titles is readily available for you to gift in the name of fun and learning.



Lego The Lord of The Rings offers more playable characters than you can shake a wizard at. CONTRIBUTED

Nat Geo TV: E10+
Rwaar! I'm a bear! You can be a bear and you can learn about bears. Never before has discovering the natural world been so interactive — right in your own living room. With the brilliant combination of live-action footage from Nat Geo WILD TV, tiny quizzes and breaks for motion-sensitive mini-games.

Kinect Sesame Street
If you take real segments from Sesame Street and add motion-sensitive gaming, you get a one-of-a-kind interactive learning experience. Rated Early Childhood, this immersive title allows your child to play catch with Elmo, count coconuts with Grover, use voice commands to take pictures, and engage with some of their other favourite Sesame Street characters.

Dance Central 3: T
Four decades of dance moves will have your kids learning original routines while dancing (a.k.a. working out, but don't tell them that) and wearing out the carpet. Seriously voice controlled and packed with more than 40 songs from yesterday and today, Dance Central 3 also includes a brand spanking new multiplayer mode for up to eight players.





Hot holiday finds for the hostess



Holiday Red Carafe, $38.45, Christmas blend, $18.95, available at Starbucks, starbucks.ca.



Limited Edition Nutcracker with Chocolates, $25, available at Indigo, chapters.indigo.ca.



Stockholm Tray, $19.99, available at Ikea, ikea.com.



Brass Wine Bucket, $59.99, available at Homesense, homesense.ca.



Cranberry Cosmo Set, $12.99, available at Shoppers Drug Mart, shoppersdrugmart.ca.



Winter Snowfall Dinnerware Set, $39.99, available at Canadian Tire, canadiantire.ca.



Cabin Sock Candy Tins – Maple Crunch, $12.95, available at Roots, canada.roots.com.



President's Choice Belgian Assorted Biscuit Collection, $4.99, available where President's Choice products are sold, presidentschoice.ca.

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DOWNTOWN HALIFAX

Recipe. Sweet and Salty Shortbread Mounds

This recipe for delightful treats makes about 5 dozen cookies. Enjoy!


Sweet and Salty Shortbread Mounds. CONTRIBUTED

Ingredients:

- 1 cup softened Gay Lea Unsalted Butter
- 1 cup instant dissolving sugar
- 1/2 cup smooth peanut butter
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 ¼ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ cup crumbled, salted pretzel sticks
- ½ cup chopped, salted roasted peanuts

Chocolate Glaze:

- ¾ cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 3 tbsp Gay Lea Unsalted Butter
- 1 tbsp corn syrup

Instructions:

Beat the butter with the sugar, peanut butter and vanilla until fluffy. Beat the flour and salt into the butter mixture just until combined. Stir in the pretzels and peanuts. Chill for 15 minutes.

Roll 1 tbsp portions of the dough into balls. Arrange the balls, about 1-inch apart, on parchment paper-lined baking sheets. Chill for 30 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 325°F. Bake, in batches, for 14 to 16 minutes or just until pale golden on the bottom (do not over-bake). Cool completely on the baking sheets.

Chocolate Glaze: Melt chocolate chips with butter and corn syrup until smooth.

Dip the top of each cookie into the chocolate mixture. Sprinkle with additional finely chopped pretzels and peanuts to garnish. Let stand until chocolate is set.

Tip:

Store the baked cookies in an airtight container at room temperature for up to one week, or in the freezer for up to one month.

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DVDs, Blu-rays and box sets — Oh my!

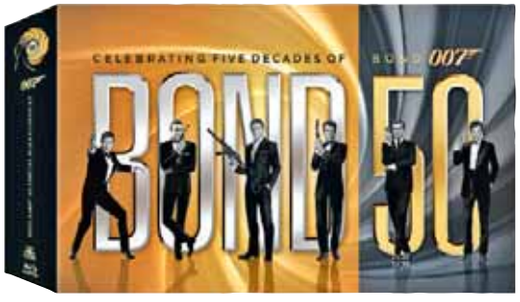
KEITH CARMAN
For Metro

Whether it's for that special someone or to round out your own collection, Blu-rays and DVDs are always a wise choice come holiday season. Let's face it: Who's about to pass on hours of entertainment from the comfort of the family sofa?

At that, there are a multitude of films, documentaries and television series releases at this time of year. A few options:



Dark Knight Rises (Warner Home Video)
Eight years after his last tussle with The Joker, we find Batman up against a new nemesis. Garnering plenty of acclaim, this action flick's home video release finds the Blu-ray treated to a 1080p transfer with 5.1 DTS-HD Master Audio, an hour's worth of IMAX footage and more. The DVD will feature an anamorphic widescreen presentation, 5.1 Dolby Digital audio, an UltraViolet copy of the film and The Journey of Bruce Wayne featurette.





Ted (Universal)
Easily one of the year's more surprising — if not altogether shocking — movies, Family Guy creator Seth MacFarlane's Ted focuses on a "foul-mouthed, hard-partying teddy bear and his 35-year-old best friend." Starring the likes of Mark Wahlberg, Mila Kunis and Giovanni Ribisi, it's no wonder Ted was No. 1 at the box office. Combining the Blu-ray, DVD, digital and UltraViolet versions along with extras such as a gag reel, deleted scenes, making-of featurettes, a commentary and more, it might be raunchy but it's quite rousing.





Seeking A Friend For The End Of The World (Focus Features)
A touch oddball but entirely endearing, this rom-com starring Steve Carell and Keira Knightley is a perfect reason to pull that loved one closer. Realizing he is alone at the end of the world, Carell searches out his estranged wife with the assistance of a neighbour. Interestingly, her good intentions turn into a rather large monkey wrench.

Bond 50: Celebrating Five Decades of James Bond (MGM)
For the truly dedicated fan, this bold Blu-ray collection showcases 007 from start to current: a collectible box featuring all 22 James Bond films. Not enough? Well, it also boasts more than 130 hours of bonus features including never-before-seen content from the Bond archives.



Doctor Who Series 7, Part 1 (Warner)
In keeping with the U.K. dogooder theme, time-travelling intellectual Doctor Who sees the first instalment of Series 7 hit shelves in both Blu-ray and DVD. Packed with five gripping episodes, this era in the lengthy franchise is lauded as one of its best.



The Simpsons Season 15 (20th Century Fox Home Entertainment)
Need something a little lighter on the brain but no less entertaining? The family known to every corner of the globe issues its 15th season just in time for, well, wasting time. Initially airing circa 2003, this release is packed with 22 episodes over four discs and a plethora of extras including deleted scenes, featurettes and Blu-ray-only extra episodes.

ParaNorman (Alliance)
In this animated feature, a small town is overrun with zombies. It's up to geeky local boy Norman to save everyone. Able to converse with the dead, it's his task to eliminate the hordes of ghosts, witches and the like. Packed with a Blu-ray, DVD and Digital copy — all relayed in 3-D — it's a fun flick for the whole family.

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KEITH CARMAN
For Metro

Downloading is clearly a fast and easy means of garnering the latest, greatest pieces of aural majesty.

Still, when it comes to festive times, no credit card-sized gift certificate offering musical megabytes comes close to stuffing a stocking or stirring excitement quite like a tangible CD or box set. It's with this means of piling up presents under the tree that we offer some suggestions for sating melodic enthusiasts.

For most people, folk rock tends to be a rather safe bet and who better to place odds on than Canucks Great Big Sea? Issuing their XX (Warner) box set just in time for the holidays, the package showcases two albums (Rogue Waves and CBC Key Note) as well as the Meet Great Big Sea DVD, 104-page bound book, calendar, two posters, two lyric sheets, postcard, souvenir laminates and stickers.

For a little more twang, country folk fans might appreciate Toby Keith's latest Hope On The Rocks (Universal). To go the extra mile, try the deluxe edition featuring remixes and live versions of tracks. Overall, it's an album the artist himself wryly described to Billboard Magazine as "the same stuff I usually do." Now there's a sales point.

Tipping one's hat to the essence of soul, chanteuse Bettye LaVette's latest work Thankful N' Thoughtful (ANTI) has kicked up plenty of smoke in its mere two-plus months on the shelves. Then again, with 50 years in the business, LaVette knows her away around a solid tune.

Some other gents with their own aesthetic marvel and lengthy time belting out blues-fuelled ditties, ZZ Top issue their first full-length in nine years. Dubbed La Futura (American), it's packed with that self-proclaimed "Little Ol' Band From Texas" at its finest.


Neil Young

Speaking of finest, national treasure Neil Young assembles his beloved Crazy Horse crew for Psychedelic Pill (Warner), their first onslaught of warble-throated originals in a full-on decade. With nine tracks clocking in at 85 minutes, it's sure to satisfy even the most diehard Young freak.

For something far more up-beat, consider positively charged anthemic rock vocalist Andrew W.K.'s 10th anniversary edition of legendary debut I Get Wet (Century Media). Available in three versions, its features range from a simple double CD to two-album gatefold LP boasting bonus tracks and 20-page full-colour booklet. For devout fans, there's even a 500-copy limited collectors edition replete with autographed booklet and either a lock of W.K.'s hair, a piece of his signature white jeans or an autographed plane ticket from his 2012 world tour.

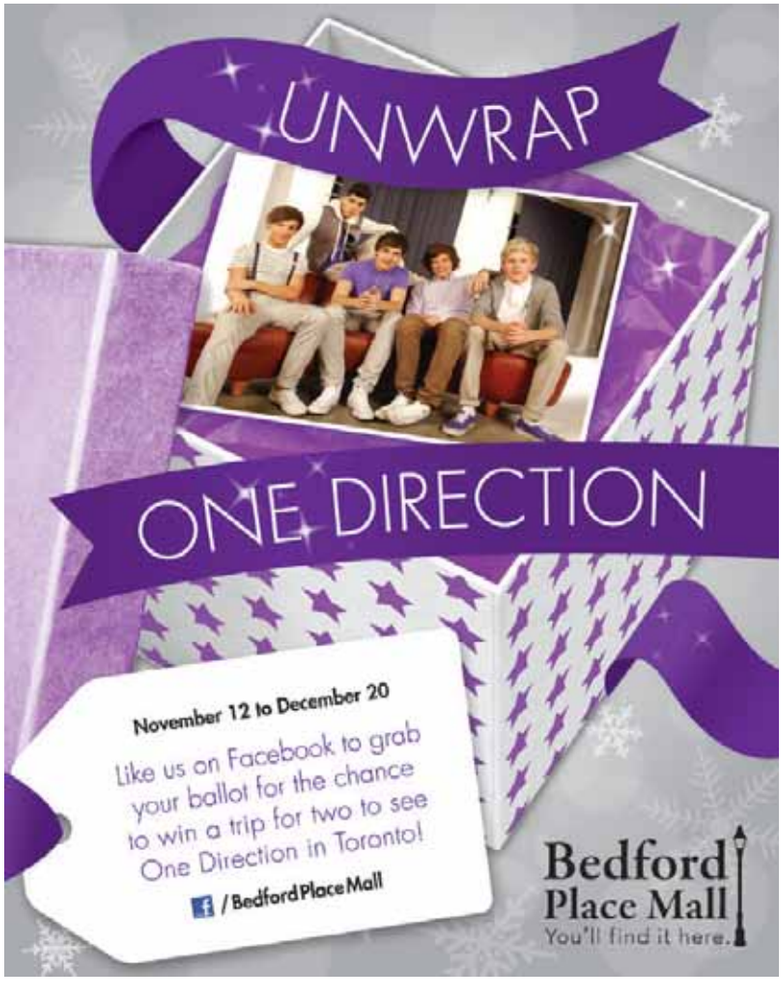
Those looking to tide over the more anodized music fans on their gift lists would do well to check out metallions As I Lay Dying's sixth studio effort Awakened (Metal Blade) as an option. Peaking at No. 11 on the Billboard charts, it clearly hasn't steered many headbangers wrong.

Finally, as the lines between punk rock and heavy metal become further blurred, hardcore mainstays Converge shatter all previous expectations via latest Epitaph Records release All We Love We Leave Behind. Thick, pummelling and vicious, it's the perfect onslaught of barbed brawn for any brawny music buff.











Inspire others with green gift options

LISA BORDEN
YummyMummyClub.ca

Instead of careening madly around stores, desperately purchasing gifts this holiday season (translation: Possibly useless stuff that is not needed or wanted), make the getting and giving of gifts green this year.

The green present is one that inspires people to live healthier lives, makes the world a better place, supports good people and companies, doesn't contribute excess litter and waste, and makes your getters very happy.

To help you in your quest to give the perfect green gifts, here are some great ideas for the holiday season:

SHARE YOUR OWN GIFTS

Make something (cookies? bread?) and deliver it once a month. Offer up what you are good at (babysitting? handiwork?) and give as a gift certificate. You can even collect your favourite recipes and put them into a recipe box.

GIVE GIFTS THAT ARE INDULGENT (BUT NOT REALLY!)

Why not give an organic hot/cold therapy pillow, or fair trade chocolate, coffee, or tea?

GIVE A GIFT THAT ISN'T A THING

Give a membership to a museum or art gallery, or a night out at the movies, a tree to plant, a weekend away, tickets to a concert, or a donation to a favourite charity.



Making cookies and delivering them once a month is a present that may inspire others to make the world a better place. GEORGE DOYLE/STOCKBYTE/THINKSTOCK

GIVE GIFTS THAT KEEP ON GIVING

Reusable water bottles (not plastic!) and reusable grocery bags make great gifts.

Or you can even send local weekly fruit and vegetable boxes.

BE CREATIVE

Use reusable containers or bags to package. Use old newspapers, magazines or comics to wrap. Use scarves, bandanas, belts or shoelaces to tie. Use fresh herbs, old buttons or cut-up textiles to adorn.

AND HINTS FOR THE DAY AFTER ...

Wrapping paper and ribbon from others: Re-use.

The big pile of holiday cards from everyone: Recreate (make them into note cards).

Unneeded and unwanted stuff: Re-gift.

Family and friends: Remind them that next year they can do what you have done so well this year.

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Gifts made in the kitchen

From the heart. Cinnamon Cookie Ornaments will be remembered for long after the holidays

KAREN HUMPHREY
YummyMummyClub.ca

There's something about Christmas that brings out my inner craft maven. Whenever the holidays roll around, I break out the glue gun or begin looking for something to create in my kitchen and share with people.

No matter how small or simple, it's always the gifts from the heart that I have treasured most. You can involve the kids and give them a sense of ownership over their gift giving by setting aside an afternoon and baking up some cookie ornaments for a friend.

Include a card and tie with a pretty ribbon — you have a gift to remember for long after the holiday ends.

Cinnamon Cookie Ornaments

These ornaments have been a favourite in our house for years, and if handled carefully, can last for a very long time. These are best for older teens to help you make, as they are pretty fragile.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup cinnamon
- ¾ cup applesauce
- ¼ cup white glue
- a glue gun
- drinking straw
- pompoms, buttons, puffy textured paint, ribbon

Instructions:

Mix the ingredients together to form dough. Turn out onto a cinnamon dusted surface and knead, then roll out to about ¼- to ½-inch thickness.

Cut with cookie cutters. I allowed mine to dry on wire baking cooling racks for a few days. To put a hole in the top, just cut one by pressing the straw through the dough in the desired spot.

If you choose to let them dry on a metal rack, the underside might be "stained" from the metal.

When they are fully dried, decorate by using a hot glue gun to attach small pompoms or ribbon, and try puffy textured paint-like icing for noses and eyes.

Gingerbread man shapes really work well with this because they look like real cookies and then smell nice, too.

NOTE: These are fairly fragile decorations, and if dropped or handled roughly they will break, much like cookies.

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Let kids help make ornaments. JUPITERIMAGES/BRAND X PICTURES/THINKSTOCK

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When it comes to baby products, the Royal Diaperer has it all.

"We are the one-stop baby shop for all your baby needs," says employee Joyce McCully.

The three-floor family owned and operated establishment was first opened in 1989 and is the largest speciality baby store east of Montreal.

It is located at 425 Sackville Dr. in Lower Sackville, just 30 minutes from Halifax.

"Our focus is on quality, safety, service and style," says McCully. "Some of our products include cribs, furniture, strollers, car seats, bedding, developmental toys, diapers and much more."

The Royal Diaperer has trained car seat technicians to professionally install your child's seat. Its car seat line offers superior design and engineering and includes products by Britax, Clek, Diono, Peg, and Graco.

The Royal Diaperer offers professional bra fittings for pregnant and nursing mothers, and carries a wide range of nursing supplies.

The retailer carries as many Canadian-made products as possible, such as its Natart and Dutalier furniture. New products arrive weekly and one of the latest is the new line of Green Toys. Made in the U.S., these are high quality and made from 100 per cent recycled plastic.

The Royal Diaperer also carries cloth diapers, which are designed to make cloth diapering easy.

"You and your baby will love them!" says McCully.

The Royal Diaperer has delivery in the HRM, and for people who aren't sure what to buy, gift cards are available.

"We wish our many great customers a safe and happy holiday season, and hope to see you all in 2013," says McCully.

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CANADA'S OLDEST HOBBY AND CRAFT STORE



Model cars are a great holiday gift option.

Located on Grafton Street across from the Spring Garden Road public library, Maritime Hobbies & Crafts is the oldest traditional hobby and craft store in the country.

For a great holiday gift option, assistant manager Greg Hatt says the three most popular product lines the store carries are radio control devices, model trains and plastic models.

For radio control devices, Maritime Hobbies sells cars, trucks, helicopters, planes and boats.

"We're your one-stop shop for radio control needs in the city," says Hatt, adding the store also carries a large selection of replacement parts for these devices.

Maritime Hobbies carries the largest selection of model trains east of Montreal and carries five different scales: Z, N, HO, O and G.

The retailer also carries a fantastic selection of plastic models.

"It's not just limited to model cars here," says Hatt. "We have a very wide range of military models, including airplanes and tanks, military and civilian ship models."

As its name implies, crafts are another product line offered and real concerted effort is being made to improve Maritime Hobbies' offerings in that regard.

"This year, we have really been upping our craft section," says Hatt. "The variety in there is a lot different than in the past."

Craft products being offered this year include jewelry-making supplies, fabric dyes (including a line made of natural ingredients) and Ukrainian egg-making supplies.

Maritime Hobbies is located at 1521 Grafton St. and is open from Monday to Saturday, 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.



Maritime Hobbies & Crafts carries the largest selection of model trains east of Montreal.







Robbi Daley of the Dalhousie Tigers, left, and teammate Tessa Stammberger try to stop Justine Colley of the Saint Mary's Huskies at The Tower on Wednesday night. JEFF HARPER/METRO

Colley rising to new heights with Huskies

Untouchable. Saint Mary's star leads squad to 7th straight victory



ANDREW RANKIN
andrew.rankin@metronews.ca

Thirty-seven points, six rebounds, four assists, and Justine Colley looked like she didn't even break a sweat.

The East Preston product dominated at will, leading the Saint Mary's Huskies to a 85-64 home victory over the Dalhousie Tigers on Wednesday night at The Tower.

After being named Atlantic University Sport's female athlete of the week for her weekend performances — a double-double against the Cape Breton Capers and a 32-point performance versus the St. Francis Xavier X-Women — she was at it again against Dalhousie, adding to her conference-leading 26.2 points-per-game average.

With her team struggling late in the first quarter, Colley came off the bench, nailing a 3-pointer and dropping two free throws to give her squad a 17-16 edge at the end of the stanza. Her timely fast-break basket late in the second quarter sparked a 14-4 run, giving the Huskies a solid 43-31 lead at halftime.

From there, Colley and the Huskies had their way, cruising to their seventh straight win to remain undefeated.

"We played great as a team; I really wanted this win," Colley said. "The awards are just a bonus."

Anna von Maltzahn led the Tigers with 14 points.

Laura Langille had a strong game for the Huskies, picking up 19 points.

She had nothing but praise for her gifted teammate.

"She's just a great competitor and she works so hard," said Langille.

But beyond the superstar, Langille said there's a supporting cast that's key to the team's success.

"We're great friends," she said. "We work for each other and we want to win it all together."

Quoted

"We want to win the AUS title and win the CIS title. We'll go for it all. Why not?"
Justine Colley

Men's action

Hassan Abdullahi collected 23 points and Devon Stedman chipped in 14 to lead the Dalhousie Tigers to a 75-69 overtime win over the Saint Mary's Huskies.

- Jordan Lee scored a team-high 28 points for the Huskies.

NBL. Rainmen add guard Baker to redesigned backcourt



Reed Baker CONTRIBUTED

The revamping of the Halifax Rainmen roster continues.

The club announced Wednesday the signing of shooting guard Reed Baker, a standout at Florida Gulf Coast University who finished fourth in career points with 876.

The move comes the same week that Halifax signed guard Melvin Goins, a five-foot-11 guard who started for the University of Tennessee Volunteers, traded high-scoring point guard Darren Duncan to the Windsor Express and released forward Joel Smith.

"We are really excited to add Reed to our roster," Halifax Rainmen owner and general manager Andre Levingston said in a release. "It is no secret we have struggled from scoring behind the arc this season. Bringing Baker in will really help us."

Baker has most recently played professional basketball in Bangkok, Thailand, for the Cobras of the ASEAN Basketball League. He has also played professionally in Turkey.

Reed will make his debut with the Rainmen in Ontario as the team hits the road this weekend. They'll play the Oshawa Power on Saturday afternoon, then tangle with the first-place and undefeated London Lightning on Sunday afternoon. PHILIP CROUCHER/METRO

CHL

MacKinnon gets Team Cherry 'C'

Halifax Mooseheads forward Nathan MacKinnon and Portland Winterhawks defenceman Seth Jones will serve as team captains at the 2013 Home Hardware CHL/NHL Top Prospects Game.

MacKinnon will play for Team Cherry while Jones will play for Team Orr at the showcase of the CHL's top 40 NHL draft-eligible players. The game will be played Jan. 16 in Halifax. MacKinnon, a 17-year-old from Cole Harbour, was the top QMJHL skater listed by NHL Central Scouting in its preliminary rankings for the 2013 NHL Draft.

Mooseheads forward Jonathan Drouin will also play on Team Cherry as an alternate captain.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

Hannay returns to Mooseheads

Overage defenceman Sawyer Hannay is back officially as a member of the Halifax Mooseheads and could be in the lineup Friday when the Herd hosts the Chicoutimi Sagueneens at 7 p.m.

Mooseheads general manager Cam Russell confirmed Wednesday the team has signed the Vancouver Canucks draft pick to a roster card spot and "the possibility" is there for him to play against Chicoutimi. Hannay has been practising with the team for a couple of weeks after returning from a pro stint in Austria, and Russell said they are continuing to try and find him a place to play. But with 20-year-old defenceman Konrad Abeltshauser on the shelf with a broken bone in his wrist for up to three more weeks, the team now has an open overage spot in its lineup it can use. METRO

WHL

Portland coach banned for season

The WHL is coming down hard on the Portland Winterhawks for a series of league violations.

Winterhawks GM and coach Mike Johnston, a Dartmouth native, is banned for the rest of the season and playoffs and the team has been fined $200,000. The WHL says the discipline is a result of a series of player-benefit violations that occurred over the past four seasons.

The team is also suspended from participating in the first five rounds of the 2013 WHL Bantam Draft. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Both sides have valid claims in NHL negotiations: Expert

Lockout. League and players will meet separately with mediators again on Thursday

It's a good thing U.S. federal mediators aren't seeking to determine right and wrong while meeting with the NHL and NHL Players' Association this week.

According to sports management professor Aubrey Kent of Temple University in Philadelphia, both sides have a valid reason to claim that they are in the right when it comes to their ongoing labour dispute.

"For me, the whole issue comes down to perspective," Kent said Wednesday in an interview. "Players feel as though they're being bullied and strong-armed and having things taken away — I can see that that's a legitimate perspective. Owners feel from a dollar-value perspective that the next seven years they've offered would be far more lucrative than the previous seven years were, even as good as that was.

"And if you crunch the numbers, that's actually true as well."

No wonder the sides remain so entrenched in their positions.

They met separately with mediators Scot L. Beckenbaugh and John Sweeney on Wednesday afternoon at an undisclosed location — something Kent didn't anticipate would result in a "seismic" shift in perspective from either side. The non-binding sessions are intended to try and help the sides find some common ground, and will continue Thursday.

The last move at the bargaining table came from the NHLPA, which presented a new offer last week that moved within $182 million of the league over a five-year deal. Commissioner Gary Bettman said they remained "far apart."

The work stoppage comes at a time when NHL franchise values have never been higher, with the annual Forbes rankings released Wednesday valuing 20 of the league's 30 teams at $200 million or higher.

"Both sides feel they can get a better deal by waiting it out, but my view is that time only helps owners in these negotiations," said Kent. "And it's not just in this particular negotiation, but in any labour dispute. Employees are always at a disadvantage because salary lost is never regained.

"Whereas owners were there before the players and they'll be there after the players and they have plenty of time to make up anything that is lost."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

NHL

Forbes says Leafs worth $1 billion

While the Toronto Maple Leafs became the first hockey team to be valued at $1 billion US by Forbes.com, the influential magazine concluded the fabled franchise got the "worst" value for the buck and said the NHL would be better off with increased revenue sharing.

The jump in value of the Maple Leafs — to $1 billion from the magazine's estimate of $521 million last year — is based in large part on the sale of 75 per cent of the team to telecom giants Rogers Communications and BCE Inc.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE



Canadian skier ready to launch assault on slopes

Larisa Yurkiw, from Owen Sound, Ont., prepares to blast out of the starting gate during a women's downhill training run at the Lake Louise Winterstart World Cup on Wednesday in Lake Louise, Alta. Yurkiw, competing at the Lake Louise World Cup for the first time since 2009, travelled a long road back from a catastrophic knee injury to be Canada's lone woman racing World Cup downhills this week. JONATHAN HAYWARD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Raptors' season gets uglier versus Grizzlies

Marreese Speights had 18 points and 12 rebounds to help the Memphis Grizzlies to their third straight win, a 103-82 victory over the Toronto Raptors on Wednesday night.

Marc Gasol and Zach Randolph finished with 17 points apiece, Randolph adding 13 rebounds and six assists. Mike Conley had 16 points, going 4 of 5 on three-pointers, and Rudy Gay added 14 as Memphis maintained the best record in the NBA (11-2).

DeMar DeRozan led the Raptors with 16 points, while Kyle Lowry and Jose Calderon scored 12 apiece. Linas Kleiza added 11 points, but was 5 of 15 from the field, as Toronto lost its sixth straight.

The Raptors played without Andrea Bargnani, their second-leading scorer, who sat out after hurting his left ankle in Tuesday night's loss at Houston.

Memphis dominated the points in the paint 46-32 and held a 46-33 advantage on the boards, including 12-7 off the offensive glass, leading to 16 second-chance points.

The Grizzlies led 48-47 at the break in a half that saw 14 lead changes and six ties. The Grizzlies had an early nine-point lead, but from there it was closely played.

Conley had 10 points for Memphis, going 3 of 4 from outside the arc.

Kleiza already had 11 points for Toronto, but it took him 13 shots to connect on five. He was taking the bulk of the shots as DeRozan and Lowry, Toronto's two leading scorers with Bargnani out, combined for only four of seven shots in the first half. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Wednesday's game

Grizzlies	Raptors
103	82



Raptors guard Jose Calderon, left, is guarded by Grizzlies guard Mike Conley on Wednesday in Memphis, Tenn. DANNY JOHNSTON/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NHL. Glendale vote paves way for Coyotes sale

The Phoenix Coyotes have taken a major step toward securing an owner.

All that's left is one last hurdle.

Glendale's city council voted late Tuesday night in favour of a reworked, $320-million arena management deal with Greg Jamison, clearing the way for the former San Jose Sharks CEO to complete his purchase of the team.

"The affirmative vote by the Glendale city council is an important step toward the realization of a positive ownership resolution for the Coyotes and their fans," NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said in a statement Wednesday.

The city council approved a 20-year, $324-million deal for Jobing.com Arena in June, but, faced with growing financial constraints, city leaders sought to renegotiate the deal. The council voted 4-2 in favour of the new deal, which cuts back Glendale's payments in the first five years, gives Jamison incentives to bring in more non-hockey events and issues penalties if there is an NHL lockout.

The new arena deal requires Jamison to complete his purchase of the team from the NHL by Jan. 21, 2013, a deadline he was confident would be met.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Curling. Saskatoon's Lawton off to a hot start

Stefanie Lawton is off to an impressive start at the Capital One Canada Cup curling competition.

The Saskatoon skip won her second game of the day in Moose Jaw, Sask., defeating Heather Nedohin of Sherwood Park, Alta., 8-5 in Draw 2 action Wednesday.

Earlier, Lawton downed Sherry Middaugh of Coldwater, Ont., 10-4.

The two wins give Lawton a good start on her quest for an Olympic berth in Sochi in 2014. The winner of both the men's and women's tournaments in Moose Jaw will receive one of the six automatic qualification spots for the 2013 Roar of the Rings — the tournament that will determine who advances to the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Men's action

- Edmonton's Kevin Koe (1-0) beat John Epping of Peterborough, 5-3.
- That brought Epping's young rink back down to earth after they scored a 7-6 win over Olympic champion Kevin Martin in the first draw.

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Horoscopes

Aries
March 21 - April 20
If you know a secret about a friend, you are strongly advised to keep it to yourself. Don't embarrass them by letting other people in on information they don't need to be aware of. You have secrets too!

Taurus
April 21 - May 21
You won't find it hard to win people round to your way of thinking. With your ruler, Venus, linked nicely to energy planet Mars others want to believe every word you say. Whether or not it's true is another matter.

Gemini
May 22 - June 21
Forget about your chores and responsibilities and do something strictly for fun. This is not a day to push yourself hard. This is a day to take things easy. Time spent in the company of friends will not be time wasted.

Cancer
June 22 - July 23
Today should be a fun day for you, followed by a fabulous Friday and a stunning Saturday. Romance is under good stars right now, so let a special person know just how much you think of them.

Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
You will find it easier than usual to deal with family issues today, so make a point of trying to resolve disagreements with loved ones. It must not be all one-way traffic. It's not about blame, it's about helping each other.

Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Relaxation and affection are the keywords today. That applies not only to your dealings with loved ones but also to those you work with. Your laid back attitude will draw people to you.

Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Listen to what others tell you and act on their advice. You may wonder why they are so eager to help you but the planets indicate there is no need to be suspicious. They just want to see you do well.

Scorpio
Oct. 2 04 - Nov. 22
Cosmic changes over the next few days will bring challenges of a serious nature, but that does not mean you can't have fun as well. Today's Venus-Mars link will bring out your playful side — and maybe your romantic side too.

Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Don't let money worries get in the way of taking a personal relationship to a new level. You don't have to spend a fortune to have fun with the object of your affection, just do things together that you both enjoy.

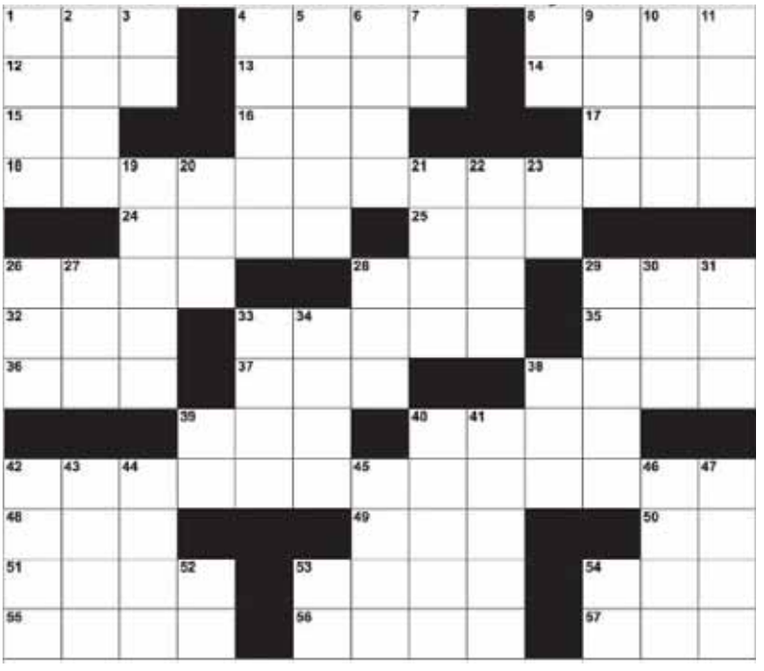
Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
Make sure you get out and about, and interact with wide a range of people today. The more you are on the move, the more likely it is you will meet someone with whom you can make beautiful music.

Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Watch out for opportunities to boost your reputation today. Venus in the career area of your chart, linked to go-getting Mars, will open doors to you that may have been closed before. Or maybe you never knew they existed!

Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
Your sparkling personality will draw people to you like moths to a flame today. Wherever you go, others will want to be your friend, and you'll have more than enough warmth to go around. SALLY BROMPTON

Crossword

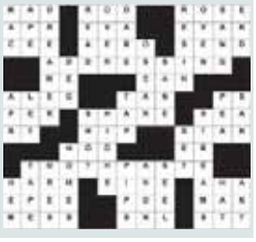
BY BETTY MARTIN



Across
1. Pot cover
4. Heard on Perry Mason
8. Wing reach
12. Electrified particle
13. Inspired
14. Tedious office job
15. Movie alien
16. Cheers was one
17. Orange Pekoe or Earl Grey
18. Buffy the — — (2 words)
24. First class (2 words)
25. Carol Burnett tugged this
26. Bundle
28. Barn layer
29. Precious jewel
32. Food scrap
33. Easel board
35. — Speedwagon
36. Mornings (abbr.)
37. Exclamations of contentment
38. He played the Skipper on Gilligan's Island
39. Scrape out a living
40. Slime
42. Set a programme to music
48. Sales agent (abbr.)
49. Hard knock
50. Egyptian Sun God
51. Extremely dry
53. Found in an atlas
54. " — Cup"
55. Greet
56. Pochard
57. Wheel of Fortune purchase

Down
1. Actor Schreiber
2. Small amount
3. He starred in "The Pink Panther" movies (init.)
4. Log home
5. Alert
6. Withered
7. Asner or Norton
8. Nora on Brothers & Sisters (init.)
9. Feel sorry for
10. Aweather
11. Close by
19. Soda fountain treats
20. "The Raven" poet
21. As — on TV
22. Acreage
23. State where Evening Shade was set (abbr.)
26. Fancy scarf
27. Upper limb
28. This Hour — 22 Minutes
29. Diagram
30. Slippery fish
31. One of The Three Stooges
33. Japanese wine
34. Only Cosby son the The Cosby Show
38. Jump
39. Hospital waiting room (abbr.)
40. Green or purple fruit
41. Slip up
42. Study hard for a test
43. — Come the Brides
44. Early Ron Howard role
45. Metric weight
46. Moran of Happy Days
47. Giant powerful dog: Great —
52. The star of The Apprentice (init.)
53. Form of address
54. British thanks

Yesterday's Crossword



What's online

See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers.

Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

			3	2			5	7
4	3			5	9			1
	4				3		9	
	1	2				6	7	
	5		8				1	
9			1	6			4	2
1	8			3	5			

Yesterday's Sudoku

5	1	7	6	3	2	4	9	8
4	6	9	1	8	5	2	7	3
2	8	3	9	7	4	1	6	5
8	4	2	3	1	6	9	5	7
1	7	5	2	9	8	6	3	4
3	9	6	5	4	7	8	1	2
7	2	1	8	5	9	3	4	6
6	3	4	7	2	1	5	8	9
9	5	8	4	6	3	7	2	1









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